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BALZAC: A MEMOIR

Balzac
AN

BALZAC'S NOVELS.

Translated by Miss K. P. WORMELEY.

Already Published:

PERE GORIOT.
DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS.
RISE AND FALL OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU.
EUGÉNIE GRANDET.
COUSIN PONS.
THE COUNTRY DOCTOR
THE TWO BROTHERS.
THE ALKAHEST.
MODESTE MIGNON.
THE MAGIC SKIN (Peau de Chagrin).
COUSIN BETTE.
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PIERRETTE.

ROBERTS BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
BOSTON.

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A MEMOIR

OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

ROBERTS BROTHERS

3 SOMERSET STREET

BOSTON

1892

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ILLUSTRATIONS.

A Portrait of Balzac, taken one hour after death, by Eugène Giraud . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Madame de Balzac considered this the best likeness of her husband; she bequeathed it to her niece, Mme. de Saint-Yves, who allowed Lord Lytton to take a photograph of it. Lord Lytton, in turn, permitted the publisher of "Le Livre Moderne" to copy it, and it was first given to the world in that periodical, Sept. 10, 1891.

A Sketch of the Prison of the Collège de Vendôme 53

Drawn from nature by A. Queyroy for Champfleury's pamphlet, "Balzac au Collège."

HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A COMPLETE life of Balzac cannot be written at the present time, and possibly never can be. The necessary documents either do not exist or they are not obtainable. Unpublished letters and papers there are, in possession of the compatriot who best understood him and who ought to write his life, if it be ever written, — the Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul; but it is doubtful if even these papers will throw light on that inner self which Balzac's own will, aided by circumstances, withdrew from the knowledge of others. There are periods in his life when he disappears. Nearly the whole of what he was to himself, what his own being was, what were the influences that moulded it, how that eye that saw the manifold lives of others saw his own life, how that soul which crowned its earthly work with a vision of the Living Word was nurtured, — what that soul was, in short, has been concealed from sight.

When he reappears, it is chiefly as he was seen and known by his literary friends and associates in Paris; bearing up against the trials of a hard life with his hearty Tourainean gayety, battling for his rights with

editors and publishers, and letting the reaction from his heavy toil and from the inward stress of his spirit have full swing in the eccentric joviality which was a phase of his nature. This is almost the sole aspect under which the man, taken apart from his work, has been made known to the world. The men who saw him thus, his literary associates, had the ear of the public, and to this day their books and publications, with two or three exceptions, remain, not false perhaps, but misleading, — so misleading that they have concealed the real man and have forced us to look at the feet of the statue, not suffering us to see its head. Unfortunately, they are the text-books from which the present generation of writers and readers derive their ideas of Balzac in his manhood.

Of his childhood and early youth his sister Laure, Madame Surville, has written a charmingly sincere and simple narrative. If read in connection with the parts of Balzac's books which are derived from that period of his life, a sufficient idea of him as child and youth will be obtained by those who will take some pains to study the subject. But Madame Surville pauses on the threshold of his manhood. She gives certain facts of his struggling life, and relates his conduct under them ; but to the man himself, the matured spirit, the great soul who has bequeathed to us so rich a legacy, we are left without a guide. Madame Surville says, at the close of her little book, written six years after his death, that the time might come when she would complete her account of his life and show another aspect of his character ; but the time, apparently, never came.

The next authentic source of information, his corres-

pondence, throws much invaluable light on his ideas and opinions about his books, and also (in the letters to Madame Hanska) on the closing years of his life; but on the formative years of his youth and early manhood they are silent. By his own will, apparently, little trace of his real self at that period, or in his middle manhood, remains, except as it may be found in his writings. Of the records left by the contemporaries who knew him, that of Théophile Gautier is incomparably the best. Materialist himself, and seeing Balzac chiefly on his material side, which was very strong and real, he nevertheless has left us almost the only true appreciation of Balzac's spirit shown in the writings of those who came in contact with him. It would seem as though the sincere affection which united them gave him insight, if not intuition.

Scattered among the writings of his associates are a few just estimates of Balzac as a man; but even these are derived from a one-sided knowledge of him. George Sand, with her broad, generous, and loving spirit, knew him personally, and comprehended him in her way. Champfleury saw him at the close of his life for a short time only, but he has made a good portrait of him, and records the fact that having read all which up to that time had been written of Balzac, he found nothing useful or representative.

It is from these various sources, and from two volumes written by contemporaries which have done much to mislead the judgment of the world (those of Léon Gozlan and Edmond Werdet) that all memoirs and studies of Balzac as a man have been derived. In fact, the latter are mostly reproductions of the former, put

into the language of the compilers, and overlaid with fanciful additions (as in the case of Gabriel Ferry's "Amies de Balzac"), which often obscure real facts, or put them out of focus.

The sole object of the present volume is to present Balzac to American readers. This memoir is intended to precede the American translations of his work. Translated work is necessarily addressed to those who have not easy access to originals. Bearing this in mind, it has been thought best to go back to the only authentic sources of information and present them in their own words, with such simple elucidations as a close intercourse with Balzac's mind, necessitated by conscientious translation, naturally gives, — an intercourse which cannot be wholly confined to the work of such a mind but, if it exists at all, must reach to the spirit that produced the work.

The reader is asked to remember that this memoir is meant to be a presentation of the man, and not of his work, except as it was a part of himself. Three fourths of that work, in translation, is, or will be, before the American public which will thus have the means of judging for itself.

In giving this volume to the public sincere thanks are offered to those who have encouraged and promoted it: to M. le Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul for the more than courtesy, the cordial kindness with which he answered inquiries; and to Prof. Edward S. Holden, LL.D., etc., Director of the Lick Observatory, University of California, for his sympathetic and inspiring advice.

CHAPTER II.

HIS SISTER, MADAME SURVILLE'S NARRATIVE.[1]

I FEEL it a duty to my brother and to the world to publish certain details which, at the present day, I alone can give, in order that a true and faithful biography may at some future time be written of the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. Balzac's friends have urged me to cut short as soon as possible the legendary tales which never fail to collect around illustrious names and so prevent the growth of errors which might come in time to be believed, as to my brother's character and the circumstances of his life. I fully understand that it is best for me to tell the facts now, while a goodly number of persons are still living to confirm them.

The *Comédie Humaine* has excited almost as much antagonism as appreciation. Quite recently certain critics have harshly judged it in the name of religion and morality, — two powers which the opponents of all great renowns have ever sought to summon on their side. I believe that never, at any period of French history, has there been a painter of manners and morals

[1] Balzac, sa vie et ses œuvres, d'après sa correspondance, par Mme. L. Surville, née de Balzac. 1 vol. Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1878. The book was first published in 1856.

who has not incurred the reproach of immorality; but I find it difficult to imagine what sort of literature would be the outcome of the principles such critics are seeking to impose upon writers, if those who profess them were to put them into practice. For instance, would they succeed in proving that Balzac was mistaken in his belief that the novel of social life and morals cannot avoid the contrasts of light and shade, and that mankind cannot be rightly instructed by the picture of their virtues only?

I have neither the power nor the desire to argue against such judgments; I am not seeking in these pages to defend my brother. Time, which has laid its chrism upon many a genius insulted and rejected in its day, will assign him his place in the literature of his country. On that judge, who alone is impartial and infallible, we must rely.

My brother was born at Tours, May 16, 1799, Saint-Honoré's day. The name pleased my father, and though it had no precedent in either line of the family, he gave it to his son. My mother had lost her first child by endeavoring to nurse it herself. A wet-nurse for little Honoré was therefore chosen, who lived just outside the gates of the town in an airy house surrounded by gardens. My father and mother were so satisfied with this woman that they put me with her and left my brother in her care after he was weaned. He was nearly four years old when we returned together to our father's house.

Honoré's fine health saved our mother from those latent anxieties which commonly find expression in tender solicitude and the indulgences which spoil a child,

but are so dear to it. In those days children did not play the important part now assigned to them in many families. They were not brought into notice ; they were kept children ; and, above all, they were trained in respect and obedience to their parents. Our governess, Mademoiselle Delahaye, may have had too much zeal in this direction, for it is certain that, with respect and obedience, she also inspired us with fear. My brother long remembered the small terrors that beset us when she took us to bid good-morning to our mother, or when we entered the latter's presence to wish her good-night. To us these were solemn ceremonies, though repeated daily. It is true that by certain signs, previously agreed upon with Mademoiselle, our mother saw (on our faces, she said) the traces of our misdeeds which drew down upon us her stern displeasure, for she alone had the right to punish or reward us. The result was that Honoré was neither petted nor transformed into a prodigy at an age when a child understands its parent's love only through smiles and kisses. If he showed at an early age any sign of the qualities which were destined to make him famous no one remarked it, and no one has since recalled it. He was a charming child ; his joyous temper, his smiling, well-cut lips, his great brown eyes, both soft and brilliant, his high forehead, and his wealth of black hair made him an object of admiration when we were taken to walk in the public promenades.

Family surroundings react so powerfully on the characters of children, and exert such influence on their fate that some account of our parents seems to me quite necessary. It will, moreover, serve to explain

the first events of my brother's youth. Our father, born in Languedoc in 1746, was advocate of the Council under Louis XVI. His profession led him into relations with the notabilities of that time, and with the men whom the Revolution brought to the surface and made famous. These affiliations enabled him in 1793 to save more than one of his old friends and former protectors. Such services exposed him to some danger, and a very influential Conventional, who felt an interest in *citizen Balzac,* hastened to remove him from the sight and memory of Robespierre by sending him to the North to organize a commissariat for the army. Thrown thus by chance into the War department, my father remained in it, and was in charge of the commissariat of the Twenty-second Military Division when he married, in 1797, the daughter of one of his superiors, then director of the Paris hospitals. Subsequently, he lived nineteen years in Tours, where he bought a house and some landed property in the vicinity of the town. At the end of ten years it was proposed to appoint him mayor, but he declined the honor, not wishing to give up the management of a large hospital which he had taken upon himself. He feared he should not find time to properly fulfil these triple functions.

My father was a mixture of Montaigne, Rabelais, and my uncle Toby in his philosophy, his originality, and his goodness of heart; and he had, like my uncle Toby, a predominant idea. That idea was *health.* He managed his life with the view of living as long as possible. He calculated, from the number of years required to bring a man to perfect maturity, that his life ought to last one hundred years and more; to attain

that *more* he took the most extraordinary care of himself, and was constantly on the watch to maintain what he called the "equilibrium of the vital forces." And a mighty labor it was, truly! His fatherly solicitude still further increased this desire for longevity. When forty-five years of age, not having married, and not expecting to do so, he had put the bulk of his property into life annuities, half on the Grand-livre [the Public Funds], half with Lafarge's bank, then just established, he being one of its largest shareholders. When he died in 1829, at the age of eighty-three, from the effects of an accident, he was receiving an income of twelve thousand francs from this source. The reduction of interest, and the waste which took place in the administration of the Tontine diminished his immediate revenues, but his green old age seemed to justify his hope of sharing with the State the immense capital of the Tontine by the extinction of all the other shareholders of his class, — a result which might have repaired the wrong he did to his family by the investment. This hope had passed into a conviction with him, and he was constantly urging his family to preserve their health so that they might enjoy the millions he should leave them. This conviction, which we all shared, made him happy and consoled him under the reverses which overtook him at the close of his life. "No matter, Lafarge will put everything right," he used to say.

His originality, which became proverbial at Tours, was quite as marked in his talk as in his actions; he said and did nothing like other people; Hoffmann might have used him as a type for one of his creations. My father was wont to scoff at other men who, as he declared,

were toiling incessantly for their own misfortunes. He could not meet a poor sickly or deformed being without railing at the parents, and, above all, at the rulers who did not give as much care to the preservation of the human race as they did to that of animals; and he held certain singular theories on this debatable subject, which he propounded in a manner no less singular. "But why give them to the world?" he used to say, walking up and down the room in his wadded gown of puce-colored silk, his chin buried in a huge cravat cherished from the days of the Directory. "They would call me an 'original'" (a term which greatly angered him), "and there would n't be one poor rickety being the less. Has any philosopher, except Cervantes, who gave the death-blow to knight-errantry, ever been able to correct humanity? — that palsied being, always young always old, which keeps alive somehow — happily for us and our successors," he would add, with a laugh.

But he never scoffed at humanity unless he was unable to succor it, as he proved on many occasions. Epidemics broke out in the hospital, especially after the return of the soldiers from Spain; at such times my father took up his abode in the hospital building, and forgetting his own health to watch over that of others, he displayed a zeal which in him was devotion. He put down many abuses without fearing the enmities that sort of courage invites; and he introduced great and beneficent improvements, such, for instance, as work-shops for the old men, for whom he obtained wages.

His memory, his spirit of observation, and his gift of repartee were not less remarkable than his originality.

He remembered after an interval of twenty years the exact words that were said to him. At seventy years of age, meeting unexpectedly a friend of his childhood, he spoke to him, without the least hesitation, in the dialect of their province, though he had not returned there since he left it at fourteen. His keen observation enabled him more than once to predict the success or failure of men whom the world appreciated far otherwise than as he judged them; time often proved the justice of his prophecy. As for his repartees, they never failed him under any circumstances. I remember that some one read aloud an article on a centenarian (not allowed, as will readily be imagined, to pass in silence), and my father, against his usual custom, interrupted the reader to exclaim enthusiastically, "He lived wisely, and did not squander his health in excesses, like the imprudent youth of the present day." It turned out, however, that this wise man was in the habit of getting drunk, and (this in my father's eyes was an enormity against health) ate a supper every night. "Well," he said, without a sign of discomposure, "he shortened his life, that's all."

When Honoré was of an age to understand and appreciate his father the latter was a fine old man still full of energy, with courteous manners, speaking seldom, and rarely of himself, indulgent to youth, with which he was in sympathy, leaving to all the liberty he demanded for himself, possessed of a sound and upright judgment, in spite of his eccentricities, and a temper so equable, a character so kind that he made his home happy to all about him. His fine education enabled him to follow with delight the advance of science and

of social amelioration, the future of which he foresaw from the start. His wise remarks and his many curious anecdotes helped his son greatly to a knowledge of life, and supplied him with the subject of more than one of his books.

My mother, who was rich and beautiful and very much younger than her husband, had a rare vivacity of mind and imagination, an unwearying activity, great firmness of decision, and boundless devotion to her family. Her love for her children brooded over them, but she expressed it more by actions than by words. Her whole life proved her love; she forgot herself for us, and this self-forgetfulness brought misfortunes upon her which she bore courageously. Her last and bitterest trial was to survive, at the age of seventy, her glorious son, and to succor him in his last moments; she prayed beside his dying bed, supported by that religious faith which enabled her to exchange her earthly hopes for those of heaven.

Those who knew my father and my mother will confirm the truth of these brief sketches. The qualities of the author of the *Comédie Humaine* are undoubtedly the logical result of those of our parents; from our father he derived his originality, memory, spirit of observation, and judgment; from our mother, his activity and imagination; and from both, his energy and kindheartedness.

Honoré was the eldest among two sisters and two brothers. Our sister, Laurence, died a young woman after five years of married life. Our brother, Henry, went to the colonies, where he married and settled. At Honoré's birth all things combined to promise him

a fine future. Our mother's fortune, that of our maternal grandmother, who lived with her daughter from the time she became a widow, the salary and the annuities of our father made a handsome income for the family. My mother devoted herself wholly to the education of her children, and thought herself obliged to treat them with severity to neutralize the effects of the indulgence shown to us by our father and grandmother. This severity repressed the tender feelings of little Honoré, who, was also reserved and shy in presence of his father's age and gravity. This state of things was profitable to fraternal affection, which was certainly the first feeling to bud and blossom in his heart. I was only two years younger than Honoré, and in the same situation as he towards our parents. Brought up together in our nurse's home we loved each other tenderly. My recollections of his tenderness date far back. I have not forgotten the headlong rapidity with which he ran to save me from tumbling down the three high steps without a railing which led from our nurse's room to the garden. His loving protection continued after we returned to our father's house, where more than once he allowed himself to be punished for my faults without betraying me. Once, when I came upon the scene in time to accuse myself of the wrong, he said: "Don't acknowledge next time; I like to be punished for you." Such pure and artless devotion is never forgotten. Our affection was fostered still farther by propitious circumstances. We lived together, then and later, in a confidence and close intimacy which had no limits. Throughout his life I knew my brother's joys and troubles, and I had, at all times, the precious

privilege of consoling him: that certainty is now my joy.

The greatest event of his childhood was a journey to Paris, where my mother took him in 1804, to show him to his grandparents. They were delighted with their pretty little grandson, and showered him with gifts and kisses. Little accustomed to such petting, Honoré returned to Tours with his head full of joyous memories and his heart filled with love for those dear grandparents, about whom he talked to me incessantly, describing them as best he could, also their house, their beautiful garden, not forgetting Mouche, the big watch-dog, with whom he had struck up an intimacy. This visit to Paris gave food to his imagination for a long time. Our grandmother was fond of relating his sayings and doings on this occasion, especially the following. One evening she had sent for a magic-lantern. Honoré, not seeing his friend Mouche among the audience, jumped up, calling out in a tone of authority: "Stop! stop!" (Probably he felt himself master in his grandfather's house.) Then he left the room and presently returned, dragging the dog, to whom he said: "Sit you there, Mouche, and look at the show; it won't cost you anything, for grandpapa pays."

Some months after this trip Honoré's brown silk jacket and handsome blue belt were changed for mourning garments. His dear grandpapa was dead, struck down by apoplexy. It was the child's first grief; he wept bitterly when told that he would never again see his grandfather, and the recollection of the kind old man remained so present to his mind that on one occasion, long after the sad event, seeing me go off

into a wild burst of laughter while my mother was reprimanding me, he endeavored to put a stop to such tempestuous gayety, which threatened serious consequences, by putting his lips to my ear and saying in tragic tones: —

"Think on the death of your grandpapa!"

Ineffectual succor, alas! as I had never seen my grandpapa, and knew nothing as yet of death.

Thus the only words that we can recall of Honoré's first years showed kindness of heart rather than intelligence. I remember, however, that he did show imagination in some of those childish games which George Sand has so well described in her Memoirs. My brother improvised little comedies, which amused us (not always the case with greater ones). For hours together he would twang the strings of a little red violin, while his radiant face expressed the belief that he was making melody; consequently, he was much surprised when I entreated him to stop a noise which might have set his friend Mouche to howling. "Don't you hear how pretty it is?" he would say. Like other children, he read with eager interest all those fairy-tales in which catastrophes, more or less dramatic, made him cry. Perhaps they inspired him with other tales, for sometimes to his usual bewildering loquacity there succeeded long periods of silence which were attributed to fatigue, but which may really have been reveries carrying him, even then, to imaginary worlds.

When he was seven years of age he was taken from the day school at Tours and sent to the seminary at Vendôme, then very celebrated. We went to see him regularly at Easter of every year, and also on the

days when prizes were distributed; but he was seldom crowned; reproaches were more plentiful than praises for him on those great days which he awaited so impatiently, and out of which he expected such delight. He remained seven years at this school, and during that time he had no holidays. The memory of those days inspired him with the first part of *Louis Lambert.* In that part he and Louis Lambert are one; it is Balzac in two persons. The school routine, the small events of his daily life, what he suffered and what he thought, all is true; even the Treatise on the Will which one of the professors (whom he names) burned without reading in his anger at finding it in place of a theme which he had ordered the boy to do. My brother always regretted the loss of that paper, regarding it as a proof of his intellect at that period.

He was fourteen years of age when Monsieur Mareschal, the head of the school, wrote to our mother, between Easter and the prize-giving, to come at once and remove her son. He was attacked with a sort of coma, which was all the more alarming to his masters because they saw no cause for it. My brother was to them an idle scholar; they could not, therefore, attribute this peculiar affection of the brain to intellectual fatigue. Honoré, who had become thin and puny, was like a somnambulist sleeping with open eyes; he heard scarcely any of the questions that were addressed to him, and could not reply when asked abruptly, "What are you thinking of?" "Where are you?" This extraordinary state, which in after years he fully understood, came from a sort of congestion of ideas (to use his own expression). He had read, unknown

to his masters, the greater part of the rich library of the college, which had been formed by the learned Oratorian founders and proprietors of this vast institution, where more than three hundred lads were educated at a time. It was in the punishment cells, to which he was sent almost daily, that he devoured these serious books, which developed his mind at the expense of his body at an age when the physical powers should be exercised at least as much as the intellectual. No one in the family has ever forgotten the amazement caused by Honoré's appearance when his mother brought him back from Vendôme.

"See how a college returns to us the blooming children we trust to it!" said our grandmother, mournfully.

My father, at first very anxious at the state of his son, was soon reassured when he saw that the change of scene, the fine air and the beneficent effect of home life sufficed to restore the liveliness and gayety of the lad in the adolescent period which was just beginning for him. Little by little the classification of ideas took place in his vast memory, where he already registered the beings and the events which were about him; these recollections were put to use later in his pictures of provincial life. Impelled by a vocation of which, as yet, he knew nothing, he was instinctively led to books and to observations which prepared the way for his future toil and made it fruitful; he amassed materials without knowing the use to which they were destined. Certain types in the *Comédie Humaine* belong undoubtedly to this period.

In the long walks which our mother made him take,

he already admired with an artist's eye the tender scenery of his dear Touraine which afterwards he described so well. He would sometimes stop short with enthusiasm before those glorious sunsets which illumine with such picturesque effects the gothic steeples of Tours, the scattered villages on the hill-slopes, and that beautiful Loire, always so majestic and covered with sails of every size and shape. But our mother, more solicitous about his exercise than his reveries, obliged him to fly the kite of our little brother, or to run with my sister and me. He would then forget all about the landscape, and be the youngest and the gayest of the four children who surrounded their mother. But it was not so in the cathedral of Saint-Gatien, to which she took us regularly on fête-days. There, Honoré might dream at his leisure, and nought of the poetry and the splendor of that noble church was lost upon him. He noticed all, — from the marvellous effects of light produced by the old stained windows, and the mists of incense enveloping, as with a veil, the officiating priests, to the pomps of the divine service, rendered all the more imposing by the presence of the cardinal-archbishop. The countenances of the priests, which he studied daily, enabled him later to describe the abbés Birotteau and Lorau, and the curé Bonnet, whose tranquillity of soul forms so fine a contrast to the agitations of remorse which torture the repentant Véronique.[1] This church had made so great an impression on him that the mere name of Saint-Gatien awakened a world of memories in which the fresh and pure sensations of early youth, and the religious feelings which never left

[1] In the *Curé de Village.*

him throughout his life, were mingled with the ideas of manhood already germinating in that powerful brain.

He attended the lectures of the college course, and studied under his father's roof with tutors. Already he began to say that the world would talk of him some day; a speech that made us laugh, and which became the text for endless witticisms. In the name of his future fame we made him submit to innumerable little tortures, preludes to the greater tortures he was to bear as the cost of his acquired glory. This youthful apprenticeship was far from useless. He accepted all such teasing with a heartier laugh than ours, (he was always laughing in those most happy days). Never was a nature more amiable than his, and yet never did any one develop so young the desire and the intuitive expectation of fame.

But we were far from increasing or encouraging this desire. My brother, who was, as I have already said, somewhat repressed by awe, thought much more than he ever said in presence of his father and mother. They, of course, being unable to judge him from a full knowledge of what he was, regarded him, like his masters, as an ordinary boy who had to be prodded and forced to do his lessons in Greek and Latin. Our mother, who more particularly took the management of him, had so little suspicion of what her elder son already was that she attributed to accident the sagacious remarks and observations which sometimes escaped him. "You certainly cannot know what you are talking about, Honoré," she would say to him. He, for all answer, would look at her with the sagacious, or the quizzical, or the kindly smile with which nature had

endowed him. This mute and yet eloquent protest was called impertinence if our mother chanced to see it; for Honoré, not daring to argue with her, was unable to explain either his thoughts or his smile. The repression which our elders exercise over genius, the injustices which wound it, the obstacles that are put in its way, may possibly double its strength and give more vigor to its wing. At any rate, one likes to think so.

At the close of the year 1814 my father was summoned to Paris and placed in charge of the commissariat of the First division of the army. Honoré finished his studies with Monsieur Lepitre, rue Saint Louis, and with MM. Sganzer and Beuzelin, rue de Thorigny in the Marais, where we lived. He was not more thought of in those institutions than he had been at Vendôme. While doing his exercises in Rhetoric he first became attracted to the beauty of the French language. I have preserved one of his competitive compositions (a speech of the wife of Brutus to her husband after the condemnation of her sons). The anguish of the mother is given with great force, and my brother's all-powerful faculty of entering into the souls of his personages is already noticeable.

His studies over, Honoré returned for the third time to his father's house. This was in 1816. He was then a handsome youth, seventeen and a half years old, full of health and vigor; no study tired him; a smile was always on his lips; he was indeed a fine young lad, the very personification of happiness. My mother regarded work as the basis of all education, and she thoroughly understood the business of employing time. Consequently she did not allow her son one idle moment. He received

lessons in all those sciences which had been neglected in his schools, and he attended the lectures at the Sorbonne. I still remember the enthusiasm he felt at the eloquent extempore speeches of such men as Villemain, Guizot, Cousin, and others. Glowing with interest, he would repeat them, trying to associate us in these joys and enable us to comprehend them. He would rush to the public libraries to study books and so prepare himself to profit more by the teachings of those illustrious professors. During his peregrinations through the Latin quarter he bought, from the bookstalls along the quays, many rare and precious books which he had learned how to choose. They were the nucleus of that fine library which his constant relations with publishers in after days enabled him to render so complete, — a library which he wished to bequeath to his native town, until the indifference shown to him by his townsmen whenever he returned to Tours wounded him so deeply that he resigned this intention.

Monsieur Brun, the present prefect of the Indre-et-Loire, a former schoolmate of Honoré at Vendôme, has lately, in conjunction with the mayor, Monsieur Mame, brother of the celebrated publisher who brought out Balzac's first works, placed an inscription on the house where the author of the *Comédie Humaine* was born. This is not the house, however, in which he passed his childhood. My father's residence now belongs to Madame la Comtesse d'Outremont, a friend of our family. It was formerly numbered 29 in the long street which divides the town and crosses it from the bridge to the Avenue de Grammont. The relations and friends of Balzac would have been greatly astonished in 1817, and

even later, to have been told that he would one day merit this honor paid to his memory, and still more amazed had the announcement been made to them that the street in Paris in which he died was to bear his name, and that a noble procession of great men would follow him to his last resting-place. They would not have known how to reply to such prophecies, for, in spite of the vivacious mind which was beginning to make itself felt in Honoré, no one believed as yet in his intellect. It is true that he chattered a great deal, amused himself with nonsense like a child, and showed a good-humor and at times a guilelessness which often made him our butt. Still, we might have observed at the time, had we paid attention to it, the attraction which he felt to thoughtful minds and solid conversations. Above all he liked to listen to an old friend of our grandmother, Mademoiselle de R——, who had been intimately connected with Beaumarchais, and who lived in the same house that we lived in. My brother loved to make her talk of that celebrated man until, thanks to her details, he knew Beaumarchais's life so well that he might have furnished the materials for the fine biography that Monsieur de Loménie has lately published.

My father wished his son to study law, pass through all the examinations, and spend three years in a lawyer's and in a notary's office, so as to learn the details of legal procedure together with the form and terms of deeds. A man's education was not complete, according to my father's ideas, if he did not have a knowledge of ancient and modern legislation, and, above all, of the laws of his own country. Honoré

therefore entered the law office of Monsieur de Merville, a friend of ours. Monsieur Scribe had just left it. After eighteen months spent in this office he was received into that of Monsieur Passez, notary, where he remained for the same length of time. Monsieur Passez lived in the same house with us, and was also one of our intimates. These circumstances will explain the fidelity of the descriptions of legal offices which is so observable in the *Comédie Humaine,* and the profound legal knowledge therein revealed. I once found a copy of *César Birotteau* among the legal works of a Parisian barrister, and he told me that the work was an excellent one to consult in the matter of bankruptcy.

My brother led a busy life during these years; for, independently of the time spent in these offices and on the work given him to do by his masters, he had also to prepare himself for successive examinations. But his activity, his memory, and his natural faculty were such that he often found time to finish his evenings with a game of whist or boston with my grandmother, at which the kind and gentle old lady would contrive, by some voluntary imprudence or inattention, to let him win her money, which he devoted to the purchase of his books. He always loved those games in memory of her; and the recollection of her sayings and of her gestures used to come to him like a happiness which, as he said, he wrested from a tomb.

Occasionally Honoré accompanied us to a ball; but having unfortunately slipped and fallen, in spite of the lessons he had taken from the Opera dancing-master, he renounced the practice of dancing, so much did the

smiles of the women who saw him fall rankle in his mind; and he vowed then to master society in some better way than by the graces and talents of a drawing-room; from that time forth he was a spectator only in festal scenes which, later in life, he utilized in his books.

At twenty-one he had ended his legal studies and passed all his examinations. My father now confided to him the plans he had made for his future, which would undoubtedly have led him to wealth; but wealth was then the least of Honoré's desires. My father had formerly protected a man whom he met again in 1814 as a notary in Paris. The latter, being very grateful and desirous of returning to the son the service he had received from the father, offered to take Honoré into his office and leave him his practice at the end of a few years. My father's security for part of the expenses, a prosperous marriage, and certain regular advances from the splendid income of the practice would have cleared the position of incumbrance in a very few years.

But imagine Balzac bending, for ten years perhaps, over deeds of sale, marriage contracts, inventories, — he who was now aspiring secretly to literary fame! His stupefaction was great when the plan was divulged to him. But he openly stated his wishes, and then it was our father's turn to be stupefied. A lively discussion followed. Honoré eloquently combated the powerful reasons given to him; and his looks, words, and tones revealed so genuine a vocation that my father granted him two years in which to give proofs of his talent. This fine legal chance thus thrown away explains the severity with which he was afterwards treated, and

also the hatred which he always felt to the notarial profession, — a hatred which may be noticed in several of his books.

My father did not yield to Honoré's wishes without regrets, which vexatious events increased. He had just been retired from active service, and he had lost money in two enterprises. In short, we went to live in a country house which he had lately bought at Villeparisis, about sixteen miles from Paris. Fathers of families will understand the uneasiness of our parents under these circumstances. My brother had given no proof of literary talent, and he had his way to make; it was, therefore, reasonable to desire a less doubtful career for him than that of literature. For one vocation like that which Honoré declared he felt (and which he did indeed justify so grandly) how many mediocrities have been suffered to drift into hopeless careers by such indulgence! Consequently, this yielding of my father to his son's wishes was regarded as a weakness and generally blamed by the friends who took an interest in our welfare. "He was allowing Honoré to waste the most precious years of his life. Did the career of a literary man ever, under any circumstances, lead to fortune? Had Honoré the makings of a man of genius? They doubted it." What would these friends have said of my father's weakness if he had told them of the offer that had been made to him and refused?

One intimate friend who was somewhat brusque and very dictatorial declared that in his opinion Honoré was only good for a copying-clerk. The poor fellow wrote *a good hand*, to quote the expression of a writing master who had taught him after leaving Vendôme.

"If I were in your place," added this friend, "I should not hesitate to put Honoré in some government clerkship, where, with your influence, he will soon manage to support himself." My father, however, judged his son differently at this time; and (his theories aiding) he believed in the intellect of his children. He contented himself with smiling at such advice, holding firm all the while to his own way. It is to be presumed that his friends left him that evening deploring to each other his paternal blindness.

My mother, less confiding than her husband, thought that a little hardship would soon bring Honoré to submission. She therefore installed him, just before we moved from Paris, in a small attic room, chosen by him for its nearness to the Bibliothèque de l'Arsénal, the only library unknown to him, and where he now proposed to work. She furnished this room with the strict necessaries of a bed, table, and a few chairs; the allowance which she made to her son for his living would certainly not have sufficed for his bare wants if she had not left behind her in Paris an old woman, for many years attached to our service, whom she charged to keep an eye upon him. It was this woman whom he calls Iris in his letters.[1]

To pass suddenly from a comfortable home where everything was abundant to the solitude of a garret, where all comfort was lacking to him, was surely a hard transition. But Honoré made no complaint of this lodging, where, in truth, he found freedom, and to which he carried the glorious hopes which his first literary disappointments were unable to extinguish. It

[1] This attic room was in the house No. 9 rue Lesdiguières.

was then that his correspondence with me began, — a correspondence tenderly preserved, and now so full of dear and precious memories. I ask indulgence for the familiar playfulness of the first few extracts which I now quote. That very familiarity is their natural plea for it. I cannot suppress them, for they picture in a striking way the rudiments of my brother's character; and I believe that the gradual development of such a mind is interesting to follow. In his first letter, after enumerating the costs of moving (items which had no other purpose than to show our mother he was already short of money) he confides to me that he has taken a servant.

"Paris, April 12, 1819.

"'A servant, brother! — what are you thinking of!'

"Yes, a servant; with a name as queer as that of Dr. Nacquart's servant. His was called Tranquil; mine is named Myself. And a bad bargain he is, truly! Myself is lazy, clumsy, thoughtless. His master is hungry or thirsty, and often enough he has neither bread nor water to give him; he does n't even know how to shield him from the wind, which whistles through the door and window, like Tulou in his flute — but less agreeably. As soon as I am awake I ring for Myself and he makes my bed. Then he sweeps the room, and clumsy he is at it.

"'Myself!'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'Look at that cobweb with the big fly buzzing in it till I'm half giddy with the noise — and the fluff under the bed — and the dust on the window-panes which blinds me.'

"The lazy beggar gazes at me and does n't stir, and yet, in spite of all his defects, I can't get rid of that unintelligent Myself. . . .

"Don't be surprised that I write on half a sheet of paper, with a bad pen, and that I talk nonsense. I must be careful of my expenditures, and I economize everywhere, in writing and in mind, as you see."

In his second letter he excuses the first, which our mother had thought too careless.

"Tell mamma I work so hard that writing to you is recreation, for then I go — saving your dignity and my own — like Sancho's ass browsing on anything I get hold of. No, I won't make rough copies — for shame! the heart knows nothing of rough copies. If I don't punctuate, and if I don't read over what I have written, it is that you may have to read and reread it, and think of me a long time. There! I 'll fling my pen to the geese if that is n't a refinement of sentiment worthy of a woman. . . .

"Let me tell you, mademoiselle, that economy reigns here for the purpose of buying a piano; when my mother brings you to see me you will find one. I have taken all dimensions; by setting back the walls a piano can be got in. If my landlord objects to the expense I shall add it to the cost of the piano, and Rousseau's Dream [a piece by Cramer then much in vogue] shall echo in my garret, where a need of dreams makes itself felt."

What work he meditates! novels, comedies, comic operas, tragedies are all upon his list of things to be done. He is like a child with so many words to say he

does not know where to begin. First, it is *Stella* and *Coqsigrue*, two books that never saw the light. Of his projected comedies I remember only *Les Deux Philosophes*, which he would certainly have taken up again in after years had he lived. The pair scoffed at each other and quarrelled incessantly (like friends, Honoré said, when relating the plot). These philosophers while despising the vanities of the world struggled with each other to obtain them; and their failure to do so finally reconciled them to each other, by causing both to curse the odious selfishness of the human race. For which of these works could it have been that he so urgently wanted our father's Tacitus, a work that was lacking to the library of the Arsenal? This want was the subject of his next letter.

"I positively must have father's Tacitus; he can't want it now that he is so full of China and the Bible."

My father, a great admirer of the Chinese (perhaps because of their longevity as a nation), was at this time reading those thick volumes of the Jesuit missionaries who were the first to describe China. He was also engaged in making notes to a precious edition which he possessed of the Bible, a book which at all times called forth his admiration.

"June, 1819.

"You can easily find out where the key of the library is kept. Papa is not always at home; he does go to walk; and miller Godard is at hand to bring me Tacitus.

"By the bye, *Coqsigrue* is beyond my powers, as yet. I must ruminate over it and take time before writing.

"My dear, I don't like your historical studies and your

maps of the centuries. Why do you 'amuse' yourself (what a word to use!) in rewriting Blair? Get him out of the library — you will find him close to Tacitus — and learn him by heart. But what good will that do you? A girl knows enough history when she does n't jumble up Hannibal with Cæsar, and does n't take Thrasymene for a general, or Pharsalia for a Roman matron. Read Plutarch and books of that calibre, and you will be freighted for life without losing any of your delightful claims to womanhood. You don't want to be a *femme savante*, fie!

"I dreamed deliciously last night; I was reading the Tacitus you sent me.

"Talma is playing Auguste in Cinna. I am terribly afraid I can't resist going to see him — madness! my very stomach trembles. . . . My household news is disastrous; toil interferes with cleanliness. That rascal of a Myself neglects me more than ever. He won't go down oftener than every third or fourth day to make my purchases, and then to the nearest and worst dealers in the neighborhood; the others are too far off, and the fellow economizes in steps. And so it is that your brother (destined to fame) is already fed like a great man, — that is to say, he is dying of hunger.

"Another malign fact: coffee makes a terrible mess upon the floor; much water is necessary to repair damages; now as water does not rise naturally to my celestial regions (it comes down upon them in stormy days), it will be necessary, after buying the piano, to obtain the services of an hydraulic machine to wash up the coffee while master and valet are gaping after fame. When you send Tacitus don't forget the coverlet; and

if you could add an old, a very old shawl, it would be useful to me. Are you laughing? It is the one thing wanting to my nocturnal garb. I had to think first of my legs, where I suffer most with cold; those I wrap in the Tourainean top-coat which Grogniart, of bungling memory, constructed. [Grogniart was a little tailor at Tours, who used to make over the clothes of the father for the son, not at all to the satisfaction of Honoré.] The said top-coat coming only to my middle, the upper half of me is ill-protected from the frost, which has only the roof and a flannel waistcoat to get through before reaching my brotherly skin, too tender, alas, to bear it, — in short, the cold *nips* me. As to my head, I am counting on a Dantesque cap, which shall enable it to brave the blast of door and window. Thus equipped, I shall inhabit my palace in much comfort. . . .

"I finish this letter as Cato finished his discourse; he said 'Let Carthage be destroyed.' I say 'Let Tacitus be taken;' and I shall be, dear student of history, of your four feet eight inches, the very humble servant."

Here follows a letter which I give entire; prefacing it with a few remarks to make it intelligible. My father, wishing to spare his son the mortifications of self-love in case he failed in his new career, gave out, among our friends, that he was absent in the country. Monsieur de Villers, of whom Honoré speaks in the following letter, was an old friend of the family, a former priest and Comte de Lyon, living at Nogent, a little village near the Isle-Adam. My brother had stayed with him several times. The witty conver-

sation of the good old man, his curious anecdotes about the old Court, where he had been a favorite, the encouragement he gave to Honoré, who made him his confidant, had given rise to so true an affection between them that in later days Honoré used to speak of Isle-Adam as his "paradise of inspiration."

"November, 1819.

"You ask for news. I shall have to manufacture it; no one sets foot in my garret. I can only tell you a lot of items about myself; for instance: A fire broke out rue Lesdiguières, No. 9, in the head of a poor lad, and no engines have been able to put it out. It was kindled by a beautiful woman whom he does not know. They say she lives at the Quatre-Nations, the other side of the Pont des Arts; she is called Fame. Unfortunately the burned youth reasons; he says to himself: 'Either I have or I have not genius; in either case I am laying up a store of sorrows. Without genius, I am done for. I must then pass my life in feeling desires I cannot satisfy, in miserable envy, cruel pain. With genius, I shall be persecuted, calumniated; and I know very well that Mademoiselle Fame will have to wipe away abundant tears.

"There is still time to make myself a nonentity, and to become like M——, who calmly judges others without knowing them, takes the opinions of politicians without understanding them, wins at cards, lucky man, though he wastes his trumps, and who will one day be a deputy, because he is rich, — a perfect man! If I were to win fives in a lottery to-morrow I should be as successful as he, no matter what else I could say or do.

But not having the money to buy his hopes, I have not his wonderful opportunity to impose on fools! Poor, pitiful humanity!

"Let's talk of my pleasures. Yesterday I played a game of boston with my landlord, and after piling up *misères* and *piccolos*, and having the luck of fools (perhaps I was thinking of M——), I won — three sous! Mamma will say: 'Dear, dear! Honoré will be a gambler.' Not at all, mother, I keep watch over my passions.

"I have been thinking that after the laborious winter I am about to go through, a few days in the country would do me good. No, mamma; it is not because I am sick of my hardships — I love them. But some one close at your elbow will tell you that exercise and fresh air are very good for the health of man. Now, as Honoré is not allowed to show himself in his father's house why should n't he go to that kind Monsieur Villers, who loves and encourages the poor rebel? An idea, mother! Suppose you write and propose the trip? There, now it is as good as done; you need n't put on your stern look, for we all know you are kind at heart, and we only half fear you.

"When are you coming to see me? — to drink my coffee and eat scrambled eggs, stirred up in a dish you must bring with you; for if I succumb and go to see Cinna, I shall have to renounce household utensils, and perhaps even the piano and the hydraulic ram.

"Iris, the goddess messenger, has not arrived.[1] I will finish this letter to-morrow.

[1] This was the old woman deputed by his mother to keep an eye upon his wants.

"*To-morrow.* Still no Iris. Can she be misconducting herself? [She was seventy years old.] I never see her except on the fly, and so out of breath she cannot tell me one quarter of what I want to know. Do you think of me as much as I think of you? Do you sometimes cry out when at whist or boston, 'Honoré, where art thou?' I did not tell you that besides the conflagration in my head I have had a frightful toothache, followed by a swelling, which makes my present appearance hideous. Do I hear you say, 'Have it drawn'? The devil! a man clings to his teeth; he has got to bite sometimes, I suppose, even in my career, if only at toil. Hark! I hear the puffing of the goddess.

"Thanks for your tenderness and the provisions; I recognize you in the jam-pot and the flowers."

After long hesitation, he chose the tragedy of Cromwell for his opening work, — tragic enough, as will be seen by the sequel.

"I have chosen Cromwell for my subject, because it is the finest in modern history. Ever since I began to take it up and weigh it I have flung myself into that period tooth and nail. Ideas crowd upon me; but I am constantly held back by my want of faculty for versification. I shall bite my nails off more than once before I get through the first scene. If you only knew the difficulties of such work! The great Racine spent two whole years in polishing Phèdre, the despair of poets. Two years! two years! think of it — two years!

"But how sweet it is, working night and day, to asso-

ciate my work with those so dear to me. Ah, sister, if heaven has indeed endowed me with talent my greatest joy will be to see my fame reflect on all of you! What happiness to vanquish oblivion, and to shed another lustre on the name of Balzac![1] My blood glows at the thought. When a fine idea comes into my mind I fancy I hear your voice saying to me, 'Courage!'

"In my off hours I am scratching off *Stella*, a pretty little story. I have abandoned the comic opera. There is no way, in my burrow, of finding a composer. Besides, I ought not to write for the taste of the present day, but do as the Racines and the Corneilles did — work for posterity! And then, I must own the second act was weak, and the first too full of brilliant music."

"*Too full of brilliant music*," how much of Honoré's character is in those five words; he actually saw and heard that opera.

"Well, reflection for reflection, I prefer to reflect on Cromwell. But there are usually two thousand verses in a tragedy; imagine my reflections on that! Pity me — what am I saying? No, don't pity me, for I am happy; envy me rather, and think of me often."

His hopes were sometimes mingled with anxieties. Here is a letter in which he expresses them: —

"1820.

"Ah, sister, what tortures are mine! I shall offer a petition to the pope for the first vacant niche of a mar-

[1] This allusion is to Jean-Louis de Balzac, one of the creators of French prose, 1594–1654. He wrote "Le Socrate Chrétien," "Aristippus," etc.

tyr. I have just discovered a fault of construction in my *regicide*, and it swarms with bad lines. I am a pater doloroso this day. If I am, indeed, a miserable rhymester I may as well go hang myself. I and my tragedy are like Perrette and her milk jug; perhaps the comparison will turn out only too true. But I *must* succeed in this work and, no matter what it costs me, have something finished to show when mamma requires me to account for my time. Often I sit up all night to work; but I do not tell her, it would make her uneasy. What troubles come of a love of fame! Long live the grocers, hang them! they sell all day and count up their gains at night, and delectate themselves now and then with some horrid melodrama, and then they are happy! — yes, but they have to spend their lives between soap and cheese. So, long live the men of letters, say I. Yes, but *they* have n't a penny in their pockets, and are only rich in pride. Pooh! let us live and let live, and long live all the world!"

He sends me the plan of his tragedy; but in the utmost secrecy, for he wants to surprise the family. So he writes at the head of his letter, "For your eye only." Months are consumed over the work, about which he writes to me incessantly, with continual alternations of hope and fear. Serious thoughts begin to mingle with his boyish gayety.

"1820.

"I have abandoned the Jardin des Plantes," he writes, "for Père-Lachaise. The Jardin des Plantes is too sad. I get good strong inspiring thoughts during my walks in Père-Lachaise, where I go to study sor-

rows; true sorrow is so hard to paint — it needs so much simplicity. Of all the affections of the soul grief is the most difficult to represent; in that we moderns are the very humble servants and followers of the ancients.

"Surely the noblest epitaphs are the single names: La Fontaine, Masséna, Molière, — names that tell all and make the passer dream!"

He dreams of great men; he pities those who are victims of the vulgar crowd which understands them not, neither their ideas, nor their actions, nor their work, and he thus concludes: —

"The lives of great men must ever be in all ages the consolation for mediocrity."

He tells how he takes particular pleasure on that height of Père-Lachaise from which all Paris can be seen; the spot where his Rastignac stood after rendering his last duty to Père Goriot, where Balzac himself now rests. Standing on that spot, he asked himself more than once, as he thought on the illustrious dead about him, whether the world would hereafter pay homage at his tomb. Sometimes, in his days of hopefulness, he exclaims, like Rastignac, "The world is mine, for I understand it!" And then he returns to his garret, "where all is dark as an oven, and no one but me could see at all," he adds merrily.

Like his own Desplein in the *Messe de l'Athée* he complains that the oil of his lamp costs him more than his bread; but still, he loves his dear garret.

"The time I spend here will be to me a source of tender memory. To live as I fancy, to work according

to my taste and in my humor, to do nothing if I so will, to rest in thought on a future which I am able to make noble, to think of you and know you are happy, to have the Julie of Rousseau for my mistress, La Fontaine and Molière for my friends, Racine for my master, and Père-Lachaise for my walks — Ah! if it could only last forever."

The opinion of the family friend who advised making him a copying-clerk came back to his mind at times and made him anxious; then he would wax indignant and exclaim, "I'll give the lie to that man!" The lie given, he dedicated to him, for all vengeance, one of his finest works. Neither did he forget the smiles of the women who saw his slip at the ball; he resolved to win quite other smiles from their lips. Such thoughts redoubled his ardor for work; trifling circumstances lead often to great results; they do not make a vocation, but they spur the mind to follow one.

In another letter, sufficiently remarkable for me to remember it at this distance of time, he showed he was beginning to distinguish the different horizons of social life, the obstacles to be overcome in all careers before we can force our way through the crowds which throng the outskirts. This letter, evidently written for my mother's eye, was no doubt given to her, for it is not in my collection. In it he analyzed the cares and the toil which inevitably awaited the lawyer, doctor, soldier, merchant; the lucky chances they must encounter before they could get enough recognition to succeed. He did not conceal the difficulties and the thorns of the literary profession, but he showed that they were every-

where; "if so," he concluded, "why not grant liberty to one who feels within him an irresistible vocation?" This was the moral of the letter. I transcribe one more fragment of the correspondence dated from his garret. It is curious on account of the period at which it was written (April, 1820) and shows the clearness of a mind which was beginning to meditate widely on many subjects.

"I am more infatuated than ever with my career; for a crowd of reasons from which I will select only those which you may not have thought of. Our revolutions are far from being over. I foresee, from the way in which things are stirring, many more storms. Be it good or evil the representative system demands immense talent of all kinds; great writers must necessarily be sought for in political crises, for they alone unite with scientific knowledge the spirit of observation and a profound perception of the human heart. If I am to be a *great one* (which we don't yet know, I admit) I may some day be illustrious in other ways than literature; to add to the title of a great writer that of a great citizen is an ambition which may well tempt a man."

The scene was now to change. Honoré's first hopes were to be followed by his first disappointments. He returned to his father's house at the end of April, 1820, with his tragedy completed. He arrived all joyful, for he counted on a triumph, and he wished certain friends to be present at the reading, — not forgetting the one who had been so mistaken about him.

The friends assembled; the solemn trial began. The

enthusiasm of the reader became more and more chilled as he noted the slight impression he was making, and saw the icy or the downcast faces of those about him. Mine was among the downcast. What I suffered during that reading was a foretaste of the terrors which the first representations of *Vautrin* and *Quinola* were destined to give me. *Cromwell* did not revenge him, as yet, upon M——, who, rough as ever, gave his opinion upon the tragedy without mincing it. Honoré cried out against him, refused to accept his verdict; but the rest of the audience agreed, though more kindly, in thinking the work a failure. My father met with the approval of all by proposing to submit the play to a competent and impartial authority. Monsieur Surville, the engineer of the canal de l'Ourcq, who became soon after his brother-in-law, proposed his former professor at the École Polytechnique. My brother accepted this literary elder as sovereign judge. The good old man, after reading the play conscientiously, declared that the author ought to do anything, no matter what, *except literature*. Honoré received the verdict full in the face without flinching, for he did not admit himself beaten.

"Tragedies are not my line, that's all," he said, and returned to work.

But fifteen months of garret life had so reduced him that my mother would not let him go back to it. She insisted on his coming home, where she looked after him solicitously. It was then that he wrote, in the space of five years, ten novels in forty volumes, which he considered mere attempts at his art, and very imperfect ones; for this reason he published them under

various pseudonyms, out of respect for the name of Balzac, once celebrated, and to which he so much desired to add a lustre of his own. Mediocrity is not so modest! I am careful not to give the names of these books, wishing to obey his express wish that they should never be acknowledged.

Materially most comfortable in his father's house he nevertheless regretted his dear garret, where he had the quiet that was lacking to him in a sphere of activity in which ten persons (counting masters and servants) revolved about him; where the small as well as the great events of the family disturbed him; and where, even when at work, he heard the wheels of the domestic machine which the vigilant and indefatigable mistress kept in motion. Eighteen months after his return to his father's roof I was living, for the time being, at Bayeux, and our correspondence began again.[1] My brother, then among his own people, wrote much more of them than of himself, and with the freedom his confidence in me permitted. He gives me domestic scenes and conversations which might be thought whole pages taken from the *Comédie Humaine*. In one of these letters he compares his father to the pyramids of Egypt, unchangeable, immutable amid the sand-storms of the desert. In another he announces the marriage of our sister Laurence. Her portrait, that of her lover, the enthusiasm of the family for the new son-in-law, are all painted with a master's hand, and the pen of Balzac. He concludes with these words: —

[1] Mademoiselle Laure de Balzac married, May, 1820, Monsieur Midy de la Greneraye Surville, engineer of the department of *ponts et chaussées*, — public works.

"We are fine originals in this holy family of ours. What a pity I can't put us all into my novels." [1]

As the majority of these letters would have no interest for the public, I can only extract such parts as relate to Honoré himself. The following will show his first discouragements. He is advancing in life and sees that the way is difficult.

"You ask for particulars of the fête, and to-day I have nothing to give you but sadness of heart. I think myself the most unhappy of all the unhappy beings who are struggling to live beneath that beauteous celestial vault which the Eternal has starred with his almighty hand. Fêtes! it is but a mournful litany I can send you in reply. My father, on his way back from Laurence's marriage was struck in the left eye by Louis's whip. To think that Louis's whip should injure that fine old age, the joy and pride of us all! . . . My heart bleeds. At first the injury was thought greater than it is, happily. Father's apparent calmness pained me. I would rather he had complained; I should have thought that complaints would relieve him. But he is so proud, and justly so, of his moral strength, that I dared

[1] Mme. Surville's family loyalty omits the rest of this letter in which, after relating "very confidentially" the nervous condition of his mother and grandmother he adds, "Alas! how comes it that people have so little indulgence for others in this life; why do they seek to turn everything into a means of wounding their fellows? How few are willing to live in that hearty good-will that you and I and papa can live in. Nothing angers me so much as these great demonstrations of affection which smother you with kisses and call you selfish if you don't exaggerate your own, and have no conception of inward feelings which only manifest themselves when the right time comes."

not even comfort him; yet an old man's suffering is as painful to see as a woman's. I could neither think nor work and yet I must work, must write, write to earn the independence they will not give me. I must endeavor to get my freedom by these novels; and what novels! Ah, Laure, what a fall for my glorious projects! If they would only have given me an allowance of fifteen hundred francs a year I might have worked for fame; but for such work I must have time, and I must live![1] I have no other way than this ignoble one by which to win my independence. And if I do not quickly earn some money the spectre of the place will reappear. I may not be made a notary, for Monsieur T—— has lately died; but I think that M——, that dreadful man, is even now inquiring for a place for me. Regard me as dead if they put me under that extinguisher; I shall become like the horse of a treadmill which does his thirty or forty rounds an hour, eats, drinks, and sleeps by rule and measure. And they call that mechanical rotation, that perpetual recurrence of the same things, living!

"Ah, if something would cast a charm over my cold existence! I have no flowers in my life, and yet I am at the season when they bloom. What good will fortune or enjoyments do me when my youth is gone? Why wear the clothes of the actor if we never play the rôle? The old man is one who has dined and looks on to see others eat, but as for me, I am young, my plate

[1] He had begged his parents to grant him an allowance of fifteen hundred francs a year that he might return to a garret in Paris, where he could have solitude and the facilities for literary training of which he was deprived at Villeparisis.

is empty, and I hunger! Laure, Laure, my two immense and sole desires, — *to be famous and to be loved*, — will they ever be satisfied?

. . . . . .

"I send you two new books. They are still very bad and, above all, unliterary. You will find one or two rather funny things, and some types of character, but a miserable plot. The veil does not fall, unluckily, till after they are printed; and as for corrections, I can't even think of them, they would cost more than the book. The only merit of these two novels is, dear, that they bring me in a thousand francs; but the money is only payable in bills at long sight. Will it be paid?

"Still, I am beginning to feel my pulse and understand my powers. But to be conscious of what I am worth, and to sacrifice the flower of my ideas on such rubbish! It is enough to make me weep. Ah, if I had only the wherewithal to subsist on, I would soon find me a niche where I could write books that would live — perhaps! My ideas change so much that my method must change too. Before long there will be betwixt the me of to-day and the me of to-morrow the difference that exists between the youth of twenty and the man of thirty. I reflect, my ideas mature; I do know that nature has treated me well in the heart and in the head she has given me. Believe me, dear sister (for I need a believer), I do not despair of one day becoming something; for I can now see plainly that *Cromwell* had not even the merit of being an embryo. As for my novels they are not worth a curse, but they pretend to nothing."

He judged himself too severely; it is true that these early works contained as yet the mere germs of his talent, but he made such progress from one to another that he might have put his name to the last without injury to his coming reputation. Happily, he could pass quickly from grief to joy, for the letters which followed are full of gayety and high spirits. His novels are better paid and cost him less pains to write.

"If you only knew how little trouble it is to me to plan these books, to head the chapters, and fill the pages! You shall judge for yourself, however, because, now that your husband invites me, I shall certainly spend three good months with you this year."

He lays a host of plans, he has a multitude of hopes; he imagines himself rich and married. He begins to wish for wealth, but only as a means of success. He describes the wife he would like, and speaks of conjugal happiness in the tone of a man who has not yet meditated on the *Physiologie du mariage*. He goes to Isle-Adam to stay with his friend, Monsieur de Villers. There he attends the funeral of a physician, such as he describes in the *Médecin de Campagne*. This man, whom he had known during his previous visits, the benefactor of the neighborhood, loved and mourned by all, gave him the idea of that book. The man then buried became in after years the living Monsieur Benassis. Wherever he went he studied what he saw, — towns, villages, country-places, and their inhabitants; collecting words or speeches which revealed a character or painted

a situation. He called, rather slightingly, the scrap-book in which he kept these notes of what he saw and heard his "meat-safe."

But, rocked to sleep for a time by hope, he was soon awakened by sad reality. His novels not only did not make him rich, but they barely sufficed for his necessary expenses. The doubts and anxieties of his family were renewed. His parents talked of taking a stand. To have succeeded in getting his books printed at all was, however, a success, and showed unusual ability and a gift of fascination that was far from common; for publishers are long unattainable to the poor aspirant, who is usually rebuffed with the discouraging words, "You are unknown, and yet you wish me to publish your books." To have a name before writing is therefore the first problem to solve in this career, unless a man can enter the literary battle-field like a cannon-ball. Now my brother did not think his works had, as yet, that power of propulsion. Besides, he had no influence to aid him in the world of letters, neither had he any one to aid or to encourage him, except one school friend who afterwards entered the magistracy and who wrote Honoré's first anonymous novel with him. Dreading lest he should be forced to accept the chains which were being forged for him, ashamed of the dependence in which he was kept in his own home, he resolved to attempt an enterprise which alone seemed to offer him a chance of freedom. This was in 1823, when my brother was nearly twenty-five years old. Here begin the disasters which led to all the troubles and misfortunes of his life.

CHAPTER III.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

Balzac's childhood was divided thus: four years in the house of his peasant nurse, four years and one month in his own home, six years and two months in the seminary of Vendôme without leaving it for a single day. His sister has told us of his sunny nature during the eight years they were together. Of the subsequent six years passed in that gray and gloomy institution she tells but three things: his eager longing for the family visits; the fact (which she states in positive terms) that the first part of *Louis Lambert* is Honoré's own history in all its particulars; and, thirdly, the condition in which the boy was returned to his parents. Balzac himself takes up the tale from his eleventh year. What voiceless sufferings must lie in the years from eight to eleven, during which the sunny little child was broken in to the stern rule and desolate loneliness from which there was no escape. Remembering Balzac's imagination, the mighty gift that was born in him, it is possible to form some idea of what his dawning soul endured in its first struggle with experience.

We might suppose that the ties of family would have been weak in Balzac, exiled as he was in childhood and later from his home, where it is quite plain, though

not acknowledged by his sister or himself, that he was never understood or wisely treated. On the contrary, the spirit of filial reverence and affection which is so marked a trait in French character was never stronger than in Balzac; and the abstract principle of the Family is one of the bases on which he built his work.

The dreamy little town of Vendôme in Touraine was the site of the chief French college of the Oratorians, a fraternity instituted in Italy in 1575 by Saint Philippe de Neri, and brought to France by Cardinal de Berulle in 1611. The object of this brotherhood was the education of youth, more especially that of preachers. To this original purpose, seems to have been added in Balzac's day that of a semi-military academy, sending a certain number of cadets to the army. When the Convention decreed the abolition of the teaching fraternities the Oratorians of Vendôme quietly closed their buildings and dispersed themselves about the neighborhood. After the Revolution was over they returned and re-established the school under its former rules. On its register may be read this entry: "No. 460. Honoré Balzac, aged eight years and one month. Has had the small-pox and is without infirmity. Temperament sanguine; easily excited; subject to feverish attacks. Entered June 22, 1807. Left August 22, 1813."

Balzac's account of his life at this school is an invaluable record. Here we see the first making of his spirit; we see his mind beating its way out to the light, untrammelled by knowledge of the world, and conscious of no restraint or limit. The same power of his

mind to sustain itself on its own pinions remained with him through life, but we find other explanations of it; it was then a conscious power, affected by environment; here it is that of the pure, uninfluenced spirit, opening itself to the knowledge of wisdom at that period of life when the human creature is in simple relation to the divine; for "can anything be nearer to God than genius in the heart of a child?" The following is an abridgment of his own account of his school years as given in *Louis Lambert*.

Standing in the centre of the town on the little river Loir, which bathes its outer walls, the College is seen to be a vast inclosure of ancient brick and stone buildings, unchanged since the period of their erection, and containing all the appurtenances necessary for an institution of its kind, — chapel, theatre, infirmary, bakehouse, gardens, and a system of irrigation and water supply. This college, the most important educational establishment in the middle provinces, derived its pupils from those provinces and from the colonies. The rules forbade vacations beyond the walls. Letters to parents were obligatory on certain days; so was confession. Sins and affections were thus under strict supervision. All things bore the stamp of monastic regularity.

The two or three hundred pupils contained in the institution were divided into four sections: the *Minimes*, the *Petits*, the *Moyens*, and the *Grands*, the latter being the head class in rhetoric, philosophy, special mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Each section occupied a building of its own, with classrooms and a courtyard opening on a broad piece of ground leading

to the refectory, where the pupils took their meals together. To ameliorate their lives, deprived as they were of all communication with the world without, and severed from family pleasures, the Fathers allowed the boys to keep pigeons and to cultivate little gardens. They were also permitted to play cards and act dramas during the holidays; a band of music belonged to the military section of the college, and a shop was set up on the common ground near the refectory, where the pupils could buy pens, ink and paper, balls, marbles, stilts, and knives, and other boyish treasures.

To this unnatural life, parted from mother and sisters, alone among boys and men, and aware that until his education was finished there would be no change in it even for a single day, the child of eight was condemned. Happily, he was passionately fond of reading (having already devoured all that came in his way in his father's house) and the college librarian allowed him to take such books as he liked, paying little or no attention to those he carried away with him, nor to those he read in the tranquil precincts of the library. Absorbed in the delights of this passion he neglected his studies, and composed poems which gave no promise of future greatness, if we may judge by the following unwieldy line, the first of an epic on the Incas:

O Inca! O roi infortuné et malheureux.

This epic fell into the hands of his schoolmates, who dubbed him "Poet," in derision of the performance. But ridicule did not repress him. He continued to scribble sorry verses in spite of Monsieur Mareschal, the director, who told him the fable of the fledgling that

fell out of the nest into many troubles, because it tried to fly before its wings were grown. All to no purpose, however; he persisted in his desultory reading, and became the least assiduous, the laziest, dreamiest pupil in his division, and the oftenest punished. He was then twelve years old. George Sand records: "A friend of mine, who sat on the same bench with him, told me that he was a very absorbed child, rather heavy in appearance, poor at his classics, and appearing stupid to his masters, — a great proof of either precocious genius or strong individuality, and so it seemed in the eyes of the person who told me."

During the first months of his life at Vendôme he fell a victim to a sort of nostalgia, the symptoms of which were not perceived by the masters. Accustomed to the open air, to independence, to the care of friends, and to thinking and dreaming in the sunshine, it was very hard for him to bow to college rules, and to live within the four walls of a room where eighty lads were forced to sit erect and silent before their desks His senses were endowed with extreme delicacy, and he suffered greatly from this community of life. Exhalations, which poisoned the air and mingled with the other odors of a classroom that was often dirty, gave forth the fumes of a sort of humus which affected his sense of smell, a sense, he says, in closer relation than any other to the cerebral system, and which, if vitiated, must create invisible disturbance to the organs of thought. The loss of the pure country air he had hitherto breathed, the change in his habits, the discipline of the school, all combined to depress his vitality. He would sit for hours leaning his head upon his left hand, and gazing

into the courtyard, at the foliage of the trees or the clouds in the sky. He seemed to be studying his lessons, but from time to time the master, noticing his motionless pen, would call out: "You are doing nothing!" That fatal "you are doing nothing" was like a pin pricking his heart.

He had no recreation, because of the "pensums" he was forced to write. The pensum was a varying number of lines to be copied during recess; and the boy was so laden down with them that he did not have six entirely free days in two years. He brought these pensums upon him in a dozen different ways. His memory was so good that he never studied his lessons; it sufficed him to hear his schoolmates recite the appointed bit of French or Latin or even grammar, to be able to repeat it when his turn came. Sometimes, by ill-luck, the master would reverse the order and question Balzac first, and then he often did not know what the lesson was. He used to wait till the last moment to write his themes, and if he had a book to finish, or a revery to pursue, the theme was neglected, — fruitful source of pensums.

Another of his trials was that of physical suffering. For want of motherly home-care, the *Petits* and the *Minimes* were covered with chilblains on their hands and feet. During the winters he never walked without severe pain. This he shared in common with others, for he records the fact that out of sixty scholars in his class scarcely ten were free from this torture. To add to it, no gloves were allowed to protect their chapped and bleeding hands.

For neglected themes, lessons ill-learned, and boy-

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ish pranks, the pensum sufficed; but other offences, especially those of disrespect, real or imagined, to a master were punished with what was called "the ferule." This was inflicted by a strip of leather, two inches wide, applied to the shrinking hands of the pupils with all the strength of an angry master. But there was still a third punishment greatly dreaded by the other pupils, but which Balzac came to look on as a boon, for it gave him release from his lessons with solitude and the freedom to dream. It was called by the curious name of the *culotte de bois*, and consisted in being locked up in a cell, or cage, six feet square, the wooden sides of which had a grating round the top to let in the air. Here he was sometimes imprisoned for over a month. The old porter, père Verdun, whose duty it was to lock the recalcitrant scholars into these cages, was still living, at the age of eighty-four, some time after Balzac's death. The old man remembered "those great black eyes," and also the fact that he sometimes took him to a prison of greater severity, a gloomy turreted building, detached from the main college and standing at the very edge of the Loir.[1]

It may be very short-sighted of us to regret these trials of the child's life, which strengthened the wings of his spirit and developed an inward power of which he might never have been fully conscious without them.

In the solitude of those cells, not greater though more tangible than the solitude of mind in which he lived, reading was impossible, and the time was spent chiefly in mental arguments or in recalling curious facts

[1] See the illustration, from a drawing made on the spot by A. Queyroy, for Champfleury's pamphlet, "Balzac au Collège."

to illustrate them. Thoughts came to him by intuition (for he could not as yet have had insight) of which the following may stand as specimens: —

"Happily for me there are joyful moments when the walls of the classroom disappear, and I am away — in the meadows. What delight to float upon thought like a bird on the wing!"

"To think is to see. All knowledge rests on deduction, — a chink of vision by which we descend from cause to effect, returning upward from effect to cause."

"I feel, sometimes, that strange fantastic sufferings are going on within me in spite of myself. For instance, when I think strongly on the sensation the blade of my penknife would cause me if thrust into my flesh I instantly experience a sharp pain as though I had really cut myself. *An idea causing physical suffering!* what is to be made of that?"

It is well to remember that these speculations (and others like them not given here) were made and written down before the physiologists of the last half-century had explained or even perceived them.

"When I first read of the battle of Austerlitz I saw it all. I heard the cannon and the shouts of the soldiers; I smelt the powder; I heard the tramp of horses and the cries of men. I saw the plain where the armies clashed together as though I stood on the heights of Santon. The sight was awful, — like a page out of the Apocalypse."

"How is it that men have reflected so little on the events of sleep which *prove* to them that they have a double life? Is there not a dawning science in that

phenomenon? If it is not the germ of a science it certainly reveals extraordinary powers in man; it shows a frequent disunion of our two natures, — a fact round which my mind is constantly revolving."

Reading was a hunger of his soul which nothing appeased. He devoured books of all sorts; he even found unspeakable pleasure in reading dictionaries in default of other books. The analysis of a word, its conformation, its history, were to him a text for revery. "Often," he said, "I have made delightful journeys embarked on a single word Starting from Greece I have reached Rome, and traversed the modern eras. What a glorious book might be written on the life and adventures of a word! But who can explain to us philosophically the transition from sensation to thought, from thought to word, from the word to its hieroglyphical expression, from hieroglyphs to alphabet, from the alphabet to written language?"

A strong inclination led him to the study of mysticism. "*Abyssus abyssum*," he said, "our mind is an abyss which delights in depths." This taste for the "things of heaven" (a phrase of his own), this *mens divinior,* was due perhaps to the first books he had read. The Old and New Testaments had fallen into his hand in his father's library before he was seven years old. Was he merely fascinated by the romantic charm of those poems of the Orient, or did the child's soul in its first innocence sympathize with the sublime piety which hands divine have shed within that book? However this may be, he had since read the writings of Saint Teresa and Madame Guyon, and they were to him a continuation of the Bible and the first food of

his adult intelligence. This study uplifted his heart and purified it, and gave him a thirst for the Divine nature. Thanks to these first impressions he continued pure in thought throughout his college life, and this noble virginity of the senses had the effect, necessarily, of increasing the faculties of his mind.

Out of his mystical studies he formed for himself a theory of angels, which may be summed up as follows: There are within us two distinct beings, — an inner and an outer being. The individual in whom the inward being has triumphed over the outward being is an angel. If a man desires to obey his true calling he must nourish the angelic nature within him. If, failing to possess this vision of his destiny, he lets the lower tendencies predominate, his natural powers pass into the service of his material being, and the angel within him slowly perishes. On the other hand, if he nourishes the inward angel with the essences that accord with it, the soul rises above matter, endeavors to get free from it, and when death comes the angel alone survives and true life begins. Although created beings are apparently all of one nature here below, they are in fact divided, according to the perfection of their *inward being*, into separate spheres whose sayings and ethics are alien to each other.

He loved to plunge into that world of mystery, invisible to the senses, and exercise his mind on the toil of thought. To him pure love, the love of which we dream in youth, was the coming together of two angelic natures. Nothing could equal the ardor with which he longed to meet a woman-angel.

The apparent indolence and torpidity in which he

lived, his neglect of school duty, and the repugnance he showed to themes and pensums, together with the frequent punishments he incurred, gave him the unchallenged reputation of being the idlest and most incorrigible pupil in the school. The masters thought slightingly of his capacity, and pronounced him an ordinary scholar and a dull boy. It is noticeable that Balzac does not resent or greatly complain of the hardships and punishments he was forced to endure; he makes no claim to pity on that score; on the contrary, he seems to accept them as justly due in a measure to his idle ways. The recognition of authority was a tenet of his faith in after years, and he appears to have practised it in his earliest experience; possibly that experience may have inculcated the doctrine in his mind.

It was during his last year at Vendôme (he was then fourteen) that he wrote the Treatise on the Will which Father Haugoult, the master, or regent as he was called, confiscated and destroyed in his anger at finding it in place of a theme which ought to have been written, saying as he did so: "So this is the rubbish for which you neglect your lessons!"

It does not come within the scope of this memoir to give a descriptive account of that treatise, the loss of which Balzac always regretted, believing that it gave a true picture of his mind at that period of his life. He endeavored to replace it in *Louis Lambert;* and has no doubt done so faithfully in the main, with some assistance from his mature mind.[1]

[1] The reader is referred to the American translation of *Louis Lambert.* It is preceded by an introduction by Mr. George Frederic Parsons, which develops and makes intelligible to a patient

Six months after the confiscation of the treatise Balzac left college. He was attacked by feverish symptoms which clung to him persistently and produced at times a sort of coma, caused, as Balzac himself said, by "a congestion of ideas," and also, we may add, by the accumulated suffering and unhealthiness of his life. The head of the college, Monsieur Mareschal, wrote to his parents, and his mother promptly removed him from the school and brought him home.

No sooner did the boy return to a life of freedom and natural enjoyment than he recovered his health; a strong proof of the vigor of his constitution and also of his mind. In all estimates of Balzac's nature attention must be paid to the fact that he was eminently sound and healthy in mind and body. Though his spirit rose to regions that could be reached only by intuition, and ruminated over problems the study of which we associate with fragility of body and aloofness from the things of life, he was at the same time, and quite as thoroughly, a man with human instincts, loving life and enjoying it. In this lies, no doubt, one of the secrets of his power. It was a part of the many-sidedness of his genius; it enabled him to actually live and have his being in the men and women whom he evoked from the depths and heights of human nature. His temperament was, above all things, genial, and his humor gay. No pressure of worldly anxiety and debt, no crushing toil,

reader the thought of a book which contains divine wisdom, but is so difficult of comprehension as to need a guide. The day will come, no doubt, when its difficulties will have vanished before the world's clearer knowledge. At present this book, written fifty years ago, is still in advance of the times.

no hidden grief with which the man, like the child in his cell, was acquainted, could destroy that healthy cheerfulness or prevent the rebound into hearty and even jovial gayety. "Robust" is the word that seems to suit him on the material side of his nature, applying even to his mental processes. He was gifted with a strong common-sense, which guided his judgment on men and circumstances; though at times, it is true, his imagination interfered with his judgment, as in the famous trip to Sardinia, of which his sister will tell us, and in the harmless eccentricities related (with a grain of truth and much exaggeration) in the rather frothy and self-conscious writings of his literary associates. We may remark, in passing, that nearly all the contemporaries (except a few choice minds) who rushed into print to tell the public what they knew of Balzac, seem to have been thinking more of themselves than of him. They have done him some passing injury, but in judging of Balzac we must always remember that he was a man not for posterity only, but for the posterity of ages. Therefore he needs no controversy about him. It is sufficient to state such facts as can be proved, and draw such natural deductions as may seem just and reasonable, — making no attempt to gainsay the foolish things that have been written of him. So with his books; each generation will have its own interpretation to put upon them, for they have their message to all. Let the present day throw its best light upon his work, and leave insufficient criticism to wear itself out, — already this is happening.

The lad's health restored, his mind, which had hitherto been guided by the intuitions of a virgin spirit and

fed on abstract thought, now added to the mental wealth thus acquired a registration of the beings and events among which his new freedom cast him, amassing materials which he stored away in his vast memory. This was unconsciously done on his part, but we who know the use he made of them can look back and see the process. Here, then, were the sources of his training for his ultimate work.

His fifteenth year was spent at home among the beauties of his dear Touraine. "Do not ask me why I love Touraine," he says; "I love it as an artist loves art; I love it less than I love you, but without Touraine perhaps I should not now be living." To this year we owe the inspiration of those exquisite descriptions of scenery in *La Grenadière* and the *Lys dans la Vallée*. Perhaps it may be true to say that the greatest *charm* of Balzac's work lies in his pictures of nature, — wayside sketches, as it were, never forced or written to order, simply the necessary descriptions of the scenes through which the reader has to pass as the story leads him.[1]

At the close of the year 1814, when the family moved to Paris and took a house in the rue du Roi-Doré, in the Marais, Honoré was again sent from home to schools in the neighborhood, where he remained finishing his education till the autumn of 1816, when he was seventeen and a half years old. Within that period he wit-

[1] Among them may be specified the description of the Lac de Bourget in the *Peau de Chagrin;* the beginning of the *Médecin de Campagne;* the park in *Les Paysans:* that wonderful picture of the desert in *Une Passion dans le désert;* but above and before all, the opening of *Séraphita*.

nessed great national events: the return from Elba, the Hundred Days, the presence of the Allied Armies, and the Restoration. We can fancy what an effect these scenes must have had on an imagination like his, — but indeed we need not fancy it, for we can read it in his books. Surely he knew the old hero of the Beresina in the flesh, and the story of the Emperor was not altogether the work of his brain; and he must, beyond a doubt, have been present at that last review in the Carrousel, which he thus describes in the language of an eye-witness: —

"The expectant multitude throbbed with enthusiasm. France was about to bid farewell to Napoleon on the eve of a campaign of which all present, even the humblest citizen, foresaw the dangers. The French empire hung in the balance, — to be or not to be. That thought appeared to fill all minds, of soldiers and citizens alike, as they stood together silently in the great inclosure above which hovered the genius and the eagles of Napoleon. Army and people seemed to be taking farewell of each other, — possibly an eternal farewell. All hearts, even those most hostile to the Emperor, breathed ardent prayers to heaven for the nation's glory. Men who were weary of the struggle between France and Europe laid aside their hatreds as they passed beneath the arch of triumph, acknowledging in their souls that in the hour of danger Napoleon was France. The clock of the palace struck the half-hour. Suddenly the hum of voices ceased. The silence grew so deep that the voice of a child was heard. The spectators, who seemed to live by their eyes only, became aware of the clank of spurs and swords echoing among the columns of the palace gateway.

"A small man, rather fat, dressed in a green uniform with white small-clothes and top-boots, suddenly appeared, wearing on his head a three-cornered hat in which lay a spell almost as potent as that of the man himself. The broad ribbon of the legion of honor floated on his breast; a small sword hung at his side. The man was seen by every eye, instantly, in all parts of the great square. The drums beat; the bands played the first notes of a martial air, which was caught up and repeated by all the instruments from the softest flute to the kettledrums. All hearts quivered at the warlike call; the colors dipped; the soldiers presented arms with a simultaneous motion which moved each gun throughout the whole Carrousel. Words of command flew through the ranks like echoes. Cries of 'Long live the Emperor!' came from the multitude; the whole mass swayed and quivered and shook. Napoleon had mounted his horse. That action had given life to the silent assemblage, voice to the instruments, movement to the flags and the eagles, emotion to all faces. The high stone walls of the palace seemed to cry with the multitude, 'Long live the Emperor!' It was not a human thing; there was magic in it, — the phantom of divine power; or, to speak more truly, the fleeting image of a fleeting reign. The man thus surrounded with so much love, enthusiasm, devotion, prayer, for whom the sun had driven every cloud from the sky, sat motionless on his horse, three feet in advance of the dazzling escort that followed him, with the grand marshal to right and his chamberlain to left of him. In the midst of this mighty emotion of which he was the object, not a feature of his face gave token of feeling.

"My God, yes," an old grenadier was heard to say: "it was always so; under fire at Wagram, among the dead in the Moskowa, he was quiet as a lamb — yes, that 's he!"

When Balzac finished his legal studies, which lasted from 1816 to 1820, he was twenty-one years old. The Restoration was fully accomplished, and during those years he saw something of it socially through his family, though not in the degree to which the fame of his books afterwards introduced him. His political opinions (of which more will be said later) leaned to those of the old régime, but it was impossible for a mind so many-sided in knowledge and insight to be partisan, and his politics rested chiefly on certain broad lines of principle. His absolute impartiality, which was not that of an easy-going nature, but rather that of an ability to see and judge all sides deliberately, is evident in his books. All opinions are brought forward in the human comedy, but it would be hard to find a partisan bias for or against any of them; and due notice of this should be taken in reading his works. In fact, his admiration, and even his sympathy, were often given where his judgment saw and stated essential error, as in the case of Napoleon. Wherever he brings him on the scene it is as a mighty presence; and certainly few things have ever been written in any language so vivid, so impetuous, or so full of a certain inspiration as the Story of the Emperor in the *Médecin de Campagne*.

But the fateful day came when he was to choose his career, or rather when a career was to be chosen and forced upon him. His sister has told us the story, but here, as elsewhere in her narrative, we must read be-

tween the lines. It is plain that his father (who, we should remember, was fifty-two years old when Honoré was born), notwithstanding his own independence, and his demand for liberty of thought and action, denied that liberty to his son. He was totally ignorant of the lad's real powers; probably he took his opinion of him from the Oratorian report: "a poor scholar and a dull boy;" and there is evidence in Balzac's letters that this was the estimation in which his family held him for many years. "Will they still call me an incapable and a do-nothing?" he said after several of his great works had been written. Madame de Balzac, a stirring woman, seems not only to have shared her husband's views, but also, at times, to have instigated them. At any rate, the financial injury the father had entailed upon his children by the purchase of an annuity made it, according to French parental ideas, of the utmost consequence that the son should go to work in some way that might speedily bring wealth into the family. The profession of notary is one of the most lucrative, with the advantage of little risk, and the opportunity of so placing his son fell, almost unsought, into the father's hand.

Confronted with the family opinion of his mental capacity, and with their reasonable worldly expectations of him, we see the dawning consciousness in the youth who had written the Treatise on the Will of a higher vocation, of a thirst to exercise some as yet unknown but instinctive power of his own spirit, — held in check, however, by the filial reverence of a French son. The child had borne his trial in the wooden cage; this was the trial of the youth. His

sister has told us how it ended joyfully in freedom and a garret.

We can fancy now what that garret was to him, — the first freedom of his life! freedom to make himself that which his inner being told him he could be. It is necessary to bear in mind this inward consciousness of faith in himself; a faith, however inspired, which asked no support from others; which bore him triumphantly through something harder to endure and to conquer than doubts of friends, incessant debt, or the gigantic toil of after years, — through the discovery of his own incapacity. For the strange fact remains that he proved at first incapable in his chosen vocation. With all the wealth of observation, imagination, intuition, and power of philosophical thought that were even then at his command, he could not construct or shape his work nor bring his style into proper form. It seems incredible, but his sister vouches for it as true, that he wrote and published forty volumes before he could write one to which he was willing to put his name: "Ah! sister," he cries, "what a fall for my glorious hopes!" We have only to pause and think upon these facts to perceive the force of his struggle and the splendor of the courage that carried him through it.

He has left a more interesting and valuable picture of his life in the rue Lesdiguières than that contained in his merry letters to his sister. It is interesting to notice, by the way, that his father insisted that Honoré should live there incognito, and that friends should be told he was staying with a cousin at Alby; so that in case of failure his literary attempt might not be made known. Perhaps this command of his father was the origin of

his much talked-of habit of disappearing for months to write in solitude, during which time his friends could reach him only through a system of pass-words.

"I was then living," he says, addressing the lady to whom he dedicated *Facino Cane*, "in a little street which you probably do not know, the rue Lesdiguières. Love of knowledge had driven me to a garret, where I worked during the night, passing my days in the library of Monsieur, which was near by.[1] I lived frugally, taking upon me the conditions of monastic life, so essential to workers. I seldom walked for pleasure, even when the weather was fine. One sole passion drew me away from my studies, but even that was a form of study. I walked the streets to observe the manners and ways of the faubourg, to study its inhabitants and learn their characters. Ill-dressed as the workmen themselves, and quite as indifferent to the proprieties, there was nothing about me to put them on their guard. I mingled in their groups, watched their bargains, and heard their disputes at the hour when their day's work ended. The faculty of observation had become intuitive with me. I could enter the souls of others, all the while conscious of their bodies — or rather, I grasped external details so thoroughly that my mind instantly passed beyond them; I possessed the faculty of living the life of the individual on whom I exercised my observation, and of substituting myself for him, like the dervish in the Arabian Nights who assumed the body and soul of those over whom he pronounced certain words.

"Often, between eleven o'clock and midnight, when

[1] Afterwards called the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal; but he gives it the Bourbon name.

I met some workman and his wife returning home from the Ambigu-Comique I amused myself by following them. The worthy pair usually talked first of the play they had just seen; then, from one thing to another, they came to their own affairs; the mother would, perhaps, be dragging her child along by the hand, paying no attention to its complaints or inquiries; husband and wife reckoned up their gains; told what they expected to make on the morrow, and spent that sum in fancy in a dozen different ways. Then they dropped into household details, groaned over the excessive cost of potatoes, the increased price of fuel, and talked of the strong remonstrance they intended to make to the baker. Their discussions often grew heated, and each side betrayed his and her character in picturesque language. As I listened to these persons I imbibed their life; I felt their ragged clothing on my back; my feet walked in their broken shoes; their desires, their wants passed into my soul, — or my soul passed into theirs. It was the dream of a waking man. I grew angry, as they did, against some foreman who ill-used them, against annoying customers who obliged them to call many times before they could get their money. To quit my own life, to become some other individual through the excitation of a moral faculty, and to play this game at will, was the relaxation of my studious hours.

"To what have I owed this gift? Is it second-sight? Can it be one of those faculties the abuse of which leads to insanity? I have never sought to discover the causes of this power; I only know that I possess it and use it. I must tell you that ever since I became aware of this faculty, I have decomposed

the elements of those heterogeneous masses called the People, and I have analyzed them in a manner that enables me to appraise both their good and evil qualities."

Balzac's mind dealt with more than one philosophical problem of which his own life was a startling illustration; but he was not introspective in a selfish and personal way, or he might have thought himself under the ban of some pursuing fate. For all through his life — even to death — no sooner had he gained a vantage ground than it was cut from under his feet. He was now to lose his brief independence. Only fifteen months of his two years opportunity had expired, but the failure of his tragedy, and the deprivations he had borne must have seemed to his parents to justify their hope that "a little suffering would bring him to submission." He was not allowed to remain in his garret, but was taken home to Villeparisis, eighteen miles from Paris and from libraries. — this, we must remember, was before the days of railroads. Here he had no solitude and no tranquil time for study; on the contrary, he was surrounded by disturbing domestic elements. But, cheerful as ever, and "good to live with," as Madame Surville says of him, his letters of this period make no complaint.

Still, with all his courage, his mind seems to have misgiven him as to the possibility of working for his vocation under such circumstances. He asked his father to make him an allowance of fifteen hundred francs a year and let him live in Paris. We smile at the sum, which was scarcely more then than it would be now; for the times of the Restoration were costly.

His request was refused. This refusal appears to have been the turning-point of his outward career. Had his request been granted, it is certain that the circumstances of that career would have been very different from what they were; so far as we can now judge, the incubus that lay upon his whole life and was an agent in his death, though not the cause of it, would never have come to him.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS SISTER'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

MANY persons are unaware that my brother spent as much mind and energy in struggling against misfortune as in writing the *Comédie Humaine*, that work which, however it may be judged, satisfied the most ardent desire of his life and gave him fame. Those who were in the secret of his life and trials ask themselves, with as much compassion as respect, how it was that a man so weighed down could find the time, the physical strength, and above all, the moral force to sustain such enormous labor. If his parents had granted him the modest income of fifteen hundred francs which was all he asked to enable him to win his first success, what adversities would have been spared to him and also to his family; what a fortune he would then have made with his pen, of which he knew the value. Energetic and patient, like all genius, he would have gone back to solitude where that modest allowance would have sufficed for his wants; for, extreme in all his desires, he needed either a palace or a garret; lover of luxury that he was, he knew how to do without it. "A garret has its poesy," he often said to me. It was only where poesy did not exist that he was ill at ease.

But the insoluble question remains: Does not misfortune develop talent? Would Balzac, rich and happy,

have become the great inquisitor of humanity; would he have surprised its secrets, laid bare its feelings, and judged its misery from so vast a height? That clearness of vision granted to superior minds, which enables them to seize all aspects of an idea, is it ever acquired unless at the cost of privation and the experience of suffering? Yet such clearness of vision itself has a fatal side, for many who cannot comprehend these mighty faculties (and their number is large) sometimes cast doubts upon the moral worth of those who possess them. The dry details that follow, which I shall endeavor to abridge as much as possible, are necessary to explain the misfortunes of Balzac's life, — misfortunes so little or so imperfectly known that even his friends have sometimes attributed them to follies which he did not commit.

Whenever Honoré went to Paris he stayed in the former apartment of the family in the Marais, which his father still retained. There he became intimate with a neighbor to whom he related his fears of being forced into a profession he disliked. This friend, a man of business, advised him to seek for some good enterprise which should make him independent, and he offered to supply the funds. Balzac, transformed into a speculator, was advised to begin as a publisher of books, and he accordingly did so. He was the first to think of publishing compact editions (which have since enriched so many libraries), and he brought out *in one volume* the complete works of Molière and also of La Fontaine. He carried on the two publications at the same time, so greatly did he fear that one or the other might be snatched from him by competition.

Though these editions did not succeed, it was only because their publisher, unknown to the trade, was not sustained by the fraternity, who refused to sell or to receive his books. The sum lent to the enterprise did not suffice to pay for wide advertising which might perhaps have brought purchasers; the editions therefore were completely unknown; at the end of a year not twenty copies had been sold; and to escape paying further rent for the warehouse in which they were stored, my brother sold the whole for the price, by weight, of the fine paper it had cost him so much to print.

Instead of making money on this first enterprise, Honoré was left in debt. It was the opening wedge to that long series of such experiences which were eventually to make him so wise in judging of men and things. In after years he would not have attempted to publish books under such conditions; he would have known the probable failure of such an enterprise. But experience is never foreseen.

The friend who furnished the funds, having lost the security for his loan, and being anxious that my brother should find some business which would give him a chance to pay off the debt, took him to one of his relatives who was making a fine fortune in the printing business. Honoré made due inquiries, sought and obtained the best information, and finally became so enthusiastic over this industry that he determined to become a printer. Books were always his chief attraction. He did not renounce his intention of writing, however; for he remembered Richardson, who became rich through printing and writing both, and he dreamed

of new Clarissas issuing from his press. My brother's creditor, pleased with this determination, encouraged it, and took upon himself to obtain the consent of our parents and the necessary money to start the enterprise. He succeeded; my father made over to Honoré, as a portion of his inheritance, the capital of the income for which he had asked as a maintenance while he should give himself to literature.[1]

Honoré now took into partnership a very clever foreman, whom he had remarked in a printing-office at the time his first novels were published. This young man, who was married and the father of a family, inspired him with confidence, but, unfortunately, he brought to the partnership nothing more than his knowledge of typography. This knowledge was, of course, lacking to my brother, who thought that the zeal and activity of his partner, combined with experience, were equivalent to capital. Printing licenses were very costly under Charles X.; when fifteen thousand francs was paid for the license, and the necessary material had been purchased, there remained but little money to meet the current expenses of the work. But my brother was not alarmed; youth is always so sanguine of lucky chances! The young partners installed themselves gayly in the rue des Marais Saint-Germain, and accepted all customers who came to them. Payments, however, were slow in coming, and did not balance with the expenses; pressure began to be felt. A splendid opportunity now offered to unite a type foundry with the printing-office. It promised such profits, according to competent authorities whom Honoré consulted, that

[1] The sum is elsewhere stated to have been 30,000 francs.

he did not hesitate to purchase it. He hoped, by uniting the two enterprises to obtain either a third associate with means, or a loan. He did his best in these directions, but all efforts failed, for the securities given to his first creditor had of course the first claim, and brought all negotiations to an end.

My brother, with bankruptcy looming in the future, passed through a period of anguish which he never forgot, and which compelled him once more to appeal to his parents. My father and mother saw the gravity of the situation, and came to his assistance; but after some months of continual sacrifice, fearing that their ruin might follow that of their son, they refused to furnish more money, — at the very moment when, perhaps, prosperity was at hand. This is the history of nearly all commercial disasters.

Honoré, unable to convince his parents that a fortunate result was close at hand, now attempted to sell out; but his unfortunate position had become known, and the offers made were so insufficient that by accepting them he would have to lose all except the honor of his name. However, to avoid an imminent failure, which might have killed his old father and blasted his own young life, he made over the foundry and printing-office to friends for the price offered to him. In so doing he secured the future of that friend; for his judgment proved to have been sound, and a fortune was made out of the foundry alone. The price obtained being insufficient to pay the whole of the pressing debts, my mother advanced what money was needed for them. Honoré retired from the business weighed down by obligations, — our mother being one of his chief creditors.

It was now the close of the year 1827; our parents had sold their country-house at Villeparisis, and were living near me at Versailles, where Monsieur Surville was stationed as engineer of the department of the Seine-et-Oise. Honoré, then nearly twenty-nine years of age, possessed nothing but debts, and his pen with which to pay them, — that pen, the value of which was still unrecognized. Worse still, every one regarded him as "incapable," — a fatal epithet which deprives a man of all support, and often completes the shipwreck of the unfortunate victim. This verdict was in direct denial of the sure and rapid judgment he possessed of men and things, — a denial which exasperated him far more than that of his talent, which continued to echo about him long after he had given brilliant proofs to the contrary. Certain of his friends undoubtedly troubled him more than his numerous enemies. Even after the publication of *Louis Lambert* and the *Médecin de Campagne* they said to him: "Come, Balzac, when are you going to give us some really fine work?" In their eyes he was a trifler, a mere writer of tales, not a "serious man," — a term which impresses the common run of minds. Had he written some weighty book, so learned that few could understand it, they would have felt respect for him. And yet these very persons, inconsistent with themselves, while they deplored the frivolity of my brother's works, accused him of presumption when he touched upon grave matters in his "little books" and lectured him paternally.

"Why meddle with philosophical or governmental questions?" they said to him; "leave that to metaphysicians and economists. You are a man of imagina-

tion, — we all admit that; don't go outside of your vocation. A novelist is not obliged to be a learned man or a legislator."

Such speeches, repeated under many forms, irritated him greatly; then he would turn with indignation on himself for being wounded by those who did not understand his powers, and his anger redoubled. "Must I die," he said bitterly, "to let them know what I am worth?"

And yet such blindness was not surprising. Those who knew the child long saw him in the man; and it is so difficult to admit superiority in one whom we have always ruled that when forced to grant him some one special faculty we hasten to deny him all others. Besides, his friends argued, is not one such faculty enough for a man? how many men have none at all! Did Honoré pretend to universal genius? Such audacity deserved repression. These friends did not spare him; and it was easy for them to persuade others that with such an imagination as my brother possessed he could have no judgment. The union of the two qualities is, doubtless, exceptionally rare, and Honoré's two commercial disasters seemed to justify this verdict. If I seem to attach importance to opinions which have none whatever to-day, it is because they were thorns in the side of him whose life I am relating. Continually wounded by such injustice, my brother would not stoop to explain or defend his ideas and actions, which it was now the custom to blame without endeavoring to understand them; he went his way alone towards his goal, without encouragement, without support, — a way strewn with the rocks and thorns of his two disasters.

When he attained that goal, that is to say, when fame was his, many there were to cry aloud: "What genius! I foresaw it!" But Balzac was no longer here to laugh at such palinodes, or to enjoy their tardy reparation.

These memories have led me too far, and I return now to the year 1827, the time at which my brother left the printing-office and hired a room in the rue de Tournon.[1] Monsieur de la Touche was his neighbor. He became attached to my brother, but the friendship soon died out, and he was afterwards among his bitterest enemies. Honoré was then writing *Les Chouans*, the first book to which he put his name. Overwhelmed with work he no longer went to see his family at Versailles. Our parents complained of his neglect; and I wrote to warn him of their feelings. My letter must have reached him in a moment of great weariness, for he, so patient and so gentle, answered sharply: —

PARIS, 1827.

"Your letter has given me two detestable days and two detestable nights. I have thought over my justification point by point, as Mirabeau did his memorandum to his father, and I am incensed in so doing. I shall not write it; I have not the time, sister, and besides, I do not feel that I am wrong. . . .

"I am blamed for the furniture of my room; but every piece of it belonged to me before my catastrophe. I have not bought a single thing. Those blue cambric hangings about which such complaint is made were in my bed-chamber at the printing-office. La Touche and

[1] His debts at this time, as he mentions in a letter, amounted to 120,000 francs.

I nailed them up to cover an old paper which must otherwise have been changed. My books are my tools, I cannot sell them. Taste, the thing that makes my room harmonious, is not bought or sold (unfortunately for the rich). But, even so, I care so little for what I have that if my creditors were to put me, secretly, into Sainte-Pélagie, I should be happier than I am now; living would cost me nothing, and I could not be more a prisoner than toil is making me. The postage of a letter, the use of an omnibus are expenses I cannot allow myself; I do not go out, to save the wear and tear of clothes. Is that plain enough for you?

"Do not compel me therefore to make those trips, those visits, which are impossible under my circumstances. Remember that I have nothing left but time and labor with which to make my way; I have no money to meet even the smallest expenses. Think how my pen is never out of my hand, and you will not have the heart to require me to write letters. How can one write with a weary brain and a tortured soul? I should only grieve you, and why should I do that? You don't understand that before my day's work begins I sometimes have seven or eight business-letters to answer.

"Fifteen days more will see me through the *Chouans;* till then, no Honoré; you might as well disturb a founder when the metal is flowing. I am satisfied I have done no wrong, dear sister; if you were to make me think I had, my brain would give way. If my father should be ill you will of course send me word. You know that no human consideration would then keep me from him.

"Sister, I must live without asking anything of any

one, — live to work that I may pay my debts to all. When the *Chouans* is finished I will bring it out to you; but I do not wish any one to say a word, good or bad, to me about it; a writer's own family and friends are incapable of judging him. Thanks, dear champion, whose generous voice defends my motives. Shall I live to pay the debts of my heart?"

A few days later I received another letter which I copy, because it shows his nature. Two little screens were wanted for the decoration of the room which had already brought reproaches upon him. He wanted them just as he had formerly wanted his father's Tacitus in the old garret, eagerly.

"Ah! Laure, if you did but know how passionately I desire (but hush, keep the secret) two blue screens embroidered in black (silence ever!). In the midst of my troubles that's a point to which my thoughts return. Then I say to myself: 'I'll confide the wish to sister Laure.' When I get those screens I can never do anything wrong. Shall I not always have a reminder of that indulgent sister before my eyes? — so indulgent for her thoughts, so stern for mine. The designs can be anything you like, just what you please; I shall be sure to think them pretty if they come from my *alma soror*."

Here he is interrupted by bad news. He tells me his new misfortune with passionate eloquence, and then concludes in two lines: —

"But my screens — I want them more than ever, for a little joy in the midst of torment."

The *Chouans* appeared. The work, though imperfect, and needing to be retouched (as it was later by the master's hand) revealed, nevertheless, such remarkable talent that it drew the attention of the public and also of the press, which at first was very friendly to my brother. Encouraged by this first success he returned with ardor to his work, and wrote his *Cathérine de Médicis.* The same withdrawal into solitude, same complaints from his parents, same remonstrance on my part. Feeling content, probably, with his work when my letter arrived, he answers this time in a lively tone: —

PARIS, 1829.

"I have received your scoldings, madame; I see you want particulars about the poor delinquent. Honoré, my dear sister, is a simpleton, who is crippled with debt without having had one single jovial time to show for it; ready sometimes to dash his head against the wall — though some persons do deny that he has any. At this moment he is in his room engaged in a duel; he has a half-ream of paper to kill, and he is stabbing it with ink in a way to make his purse joyful. This fool has some good in him. They say he is cold and indifferent; don't believe it, my darling sister. His heart is excellent; and he is ready to do services to any one, — only, not having a credit with Mr. Shoemaker, he can't go of errands for everybody as he used to do; for this he is blamed as Yorick was when he bought the midwife's license.

"In the matter of tenderness he is in funds, and will return the double of what he receives; but he is so constituted that a harsh or wounding word expels all the joy

in his heart, — so susceptible is he to delicacy of feeling. He needs hearts that can love largely, that understand affection, and know that it does not consist in visits, civilities, good wishes, and other conventions of that kind; he carries eccentricity so far as to welcome a friend whom he has not seen for a long time as if they had been together the night before. This odd being may forget the harm that has been done him, but the kindness, never! It should be graven on brass if his heart contained that metal. As for what indifferent people may think, or say of him, he cares as little as for the dust that sticks to his feet. He is trying to be something; and when a man erects a building he does n't care for what idlers may scribble on the scaffolding! This young man, such as I describe him, loves you, dear sister, and these words will be understood by her to whom I address them."

My brother spent the first years of his literary life amid even greater anxieties than those he had borne in the rue des Marais Saint-Martin, through which, in after years, he never passed without a sigh, remembering that his troubles began there. Without his faith in himself, without that honor which commanded him to live to pay his debts, he would certainly never have written the *Comédie Humaine.* He told me that during these years he had, on several occasions, been assailed by temptations to suicide, such as he has given to the hero of that work of youth and power which he named *La Peau de Chagrin.* What bitter griefs, what disappointments of every kind must have been the lot of him who said in his latter years: "We spend

the second half of life in mowing down in our hearts all that we grew there in the first half; and this we call acquiring experience!"

Or this, which is sadder still: —

"Noble souls come slowly and with difficulty to believe in evil feelings, in betrayal, in ingratitude; but when their education in this matter is accomplished then they rise to a pity which is, perhaps, the highest reach of contempt for humanity."

If he did not return after his disasters to a garret like that of the rue Lesdiguières, it was only because he knew that in Paris everything is ground for speculation, even poverty: —

"They would give me nothing for my books if I lived in a garret," he said to me.

The luxury he affected, and which was so much blamed, and so immensely exaggerated, was a means of obtaining better prices for his work.

My brother, admiring Walter Scott enthusiastically, as much for the ability with which he won and maintained his success as for his genius, thought, in the first instance, of following his example and making a history of the manners and morals of our nation, selecting for that purpose its leading phases. *Les Chouans*, and *Cathérine de Médecis*, which immediately followed it, testify to this intention, which he explains in the introduction to *Cathérine de Médecis*, — one of his finest books, known to few persons, although it proves to what heights Balzac might have attained as an historian.

He abandoned this project, however, and confined himself to pictures of the manners and morals of his

own time, which he first entitled *Études de Mœurs* — Studies of Manners and Morals — dividing them into series, such as Scenes from Private Life — Country Life — Provincial Life — Parisian Life, and so forth. It was not until 1833, about the time of the publication of the *Médecin de Campagne,* that he first thought of collecting all his personages together and forming a complete society. The day when this idea burst upon his mind was a glorious day for him. He started from the rue Cassini, where he had taken up his abode after leaving the rue de Tournon, and rushed to the faubourg Poissonnière, where I was then living: —

"Make your bow to me," he said to us, joyously, "I am on the highroad to become a genius!"

He then unfolded his plan, which frightened him a little, for no matter how vast his brain might be, it needed time to work out a scheme like that.

"How glorious it will be if I succeed," he said, walking up and down the room. He could not keep still; joy radiated from every feature. "I'll willingly let them call me a *maker of tales* all the while that I am cutting stones for my edifice. I gloat in advance over the astonishment of those near-sighted creatures as they see it rise!" And thereupon this hewer of stones sat down to talk over the building at his ease.

He judged the imaginary beings he created with impartiality, in spite of the tenderness he felt for each.

"*Such an one* is a scoundrel," he would say; "he will never come to any good. *That man*, hard worker and a good fellow, he will be rich; his nature will always keep him happy." "*Those others* have com-

mitted peccadilloes, but they have such good intellects and so much knowledge of men and things that they will get to the top of the social ladder."

"Peccadilloes, brother? — you are very indulgent."

"You can't change them, my dear; they sound the abysses for themselves, but they know how to guide others. The wise and virtuous are not always the best pilots. It is not my fault; I don't invent human nature; I observe it in the past and in the present, and I try to paint it such as it is. Mere inventions would n't convince anybody."

He would tell us the news of his imaginary world as others tell that of the real world.

"Do you know who Félix de Vandenesse is going to marry? A demoiselle de Grandville. It is an excellent match, for the Grandvilles are rich, in spite of what Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has cost them."

If we sometimes asked for mercy to a young man who was hurrying to his ruin, or to some poor unhappy woman whose sad fate interested us, he would answer:

"Don't bewilder me with your sensibilities; truth before everything. Those persons are feeble, incapable; what happens to them must happen; so much the worse for them."

But in spite of this imperious talk their disasters did grieve him. One of Doctor Minoret's friends, Captain Jordy, excited our curiosity. My brother had told nothing of his life, and yet many things led us to believe he had met with great trials. We asked him about them. "I did not know Monsieur de Jordy before he came to Nemours," he replied. On one occasion I invented a little romance on the old man's

life, which I told to Honoré (such jokes did not displease him). "What you say may be so," he replied, "and as you are interested in Monsieur de Jordy I will get at the truth about him."

He was a long time hunting up a husband for Mademoiselle Camille de Grandlieu, and rejected all those we proposed for her.

"His people are not in the same society; nothing but chance could bring that marriage about, and chance should be used very cautiously in a book; reality alone justifies improbability; we novelists are allowed only possibilities." He finally chose the young Comte de Restaud for Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, and rewrote for that marriage the admirable history of *Gobseck*, in which the highest morality is to be found in the facts, not in the words.

Like mothers who particularly attach themselves to unfortunate children, Honoré had a weakness for those of his works which had the least success. For them he was jealous of the fame of the others. The universal praise bestowed on *Eugénie Grandet* ended by chilling his regard for that work. When we scolded him for this, "Do let me alone!" he would say; "those who call me 'the father of *Eugénie Gérandet*' want to belittle me. It is a masterpiece, I know, but it is a little masterpiece; they are very careful not to mention the great ones."

When the time came for the collection of his works in a compact edition he entitled it *La Comédie Humaine* [The Comedy of Human Life]; a great decision, which cost him many doubts and hesitations. He, usually so resolute, feared he should be thought

too bold. This fear is plainly seen in the noble preface which accompanied the edition. I have never been able to read the close of it without emotion; it was, unhappily, prophetic; he was destined not to finish the work he loved so well.[1] It was at this time that he associated his friends with his work by dedicating to each of them a book, or a tale, of the *Comédie Humaine.* The list of these dedications proves that he was loved by many of our illustrious contemporaries.

From 1827 to 1848 my brother published ninety-seven works; and I may add that he wrote this enormous number with his own hand, without secretary or corrector of proofs. A few facts as to the origin of some of these works may be of interest.

The subject of the *Auberge Rouge* (a true history, in spite of all that has been said about it) was given to him by an old army surgeon, a friend of the man who was condemned unjustly. My brother merely added the conclusion. The novel of "Quentin Durward," which has been so much admired, more especially as an historical tale, angered Honoré extremely. Contrary to the opinion of the world, he thought Walter Scott had strangely misrepresented Louis XI., "a king not as yet understood," he used to say. This anger led him to write *Maître Cornélius*, in which he places Louis XI. on the scene. *Les Proscrits*, written after a profound study of Dante, as homage to that powerful genius, was part of the original scheme I have mentioned. *Un Épisode sous la Terreur* was related to him by the gloomy hero of that tale. Ho-

[1] In the American translated series this preface accompanies the volume containing *Père Goriot.*

noré had always desired to see Sanson the executioner. To know what that man, whose soul was filled with bloody memories, thought, — to learn how he himself regarded his terrible business and his wretched life, — was indeed an investigation to tempt him. Monsieur A——, the director of prisons, with whom my brother was intimate, arranged an interview. Honoré went to Monsieur A——'s house, and there found a pale man of a sad and noble countenance; his dress, manners, language, and education might have led others to think him some writer brought there by a like curiosity. It was Sanson! My brother, warned by Monsieur A——, repressed all surprise and repulsion, and led the conversation to the subjects which interested him. He won Sanson's confidence so thoroughly that the latter, carried away by his feelings, spoke of the sufferings of his life. The death of Louis XVI. had caused him all the terrors and remorse of a criminal (Sanson was a royalist). The day after the execution he ordered the only expiatory mass that was celebrated in Paris in those days to be said for the king!

It was also a conversation my brother had with Martin, the celebrated tamer of wild beasts, at the close of one of his exhibitions, which made him write the short story entitled *Une Passion dans le desert*. *Séraphita*, that strange work which might be taken for the translation of a German book, was inspired by a friend. Our mother helped him to the means of executing it. She was always much concerned about religious ideas, read the books of the mystics, and even collected them. Honoré had seized upon the works of Saint-Martin, Swedenborg, Mademoiselle

Bourignon, Madame Guyon, Jacob Boehm, and others, over one hundred volumes in all, and devoured them. He read almost as others glanced; yet he assimilated the ideas contained in a book. He plunged into the study of somnambulism and magnetism; my mother, eager after the marvellous, supplied him with still other means of study, for she knew all the magnetizers and celebrated somnambulists of the day. Honoré was present at their séances, became enthusiastic over their inexplicable faculties and the phenomena they produced, discovered for those faculties a wider field than they really have, perhaps, and composed *Séraphita* under the impression of such ideas. But recalled by the necessities of life, which did not allow of his writing other books than those that pleased the public, he returned, happily, to the Real, and was detached from metaphysical meditations which might, perhaps, have misled his great intellect, as they have that of others.

Independently of his books, he had a large correspondence on business, together with other letters which took much time. During these years I find many relating to journeys in Savoie, to Sardinia, and Corsica, to Germany, Italy, and to Saint Petersburg and Southern Russia, where he made a long stay on two occasions; not to speak of trips in France to the various localities where he placed or intended to place the personages of his tales, for the purpose of describing faithfully the towns and country regions where they lived. Often, when he came to take leave of us, he would say, "I am off for Alençon to see Mademoiselle Cormon," or "to Grenoble, where Monsieur Benassis lived."

The impossible did not exist for him; and he proved

it in the first instance by finding courage to live through these early years of his literary life, when more than once he deprived himself of the necessaries of life to procure the superfluities, so needful to him in order to occupy a place in the social life he wished to paint. The recollection of those years brings back such anguish to my mind that I cannot think of them even now without sadness. From 1827 to 1836 my brother could not support himself and meet his obligations without drawing notes, the maturing of which kept him in a state of perpetual anxiety; for he had nothing with which to meet them but the profits of his works, and the time in which he could finish each book was uncertain. After getting those notes accepted and discounted by usurers (the first difficulty) he was often obliged to renew them, a second and still greater difficulty which he alone could manage; for others would have failed in negotiations where he could fascinate — even usurers. "What a waste of intellect!" he would say to me, sadly, when he returned, worn out, from these efforts which sadly interfered with his work.

He was unable to prevent the accumulating interest on his principal obligations from rolling up until it made his "floating debt" (as he called it in his gay moments) like a snowball, growing larger as it rolled; this debt so increased with the months and years that there were times when my brother despaired of ever paying it. To pacify the more threatening of his creditors he performed actual prodigies of labor from time to time, which overwhelmed both publishers and printers. This almost superhuman toil was, undoubtedly, one of the causes which shortened his life. A great mental shock

brought on the heart disease of which he ultimately died, but it might not have killed him so early had it not been developed by the over-heating of his blood. This condition of anxiety lasted until the time came for the reprinting of his works, which enabled him to at least partially free himself from debt. With what joy he lessened the figures of that terrible amount, which he kept ever under his eyes so as to stimulate his courage.

"After such toil as this, when shall I have a penny for myself?" he often said to me. "I will certainly frame it; it will be, in itself, the history of my life."

A few letters of the years 1832, 1833, 1834, 1835, during which he travelled much, will show the condition of his soul far better than I can tell it. They are written from Angoulême, Aix-les-Bains, Saché, Marseilles, and Milan. The books of which he speaks enable me to assign the dates, which are nearly always wanting to his letters. Angoulême was a town where the Carrauds, friends of ours, whom my brother often visited, were then living. (Commandant Carraud was in charge of the government powder-works.) A warm friendship had sprung up between my brother and this honorable family in 1826, when I was living at Versailles. Monsieur Carraud was then director of the military school of Saint-Cyr. I was overjoyed to meet his wife, with whom I had been brought up. Her faithful and intelligent friendship was one of the happinesses of my brother's life. Those of his works which are signed at Angoulême and Frapesle (a country-seat belonging to Madame Carraud in Berry) bear testimony to their deep sympathy.

Saché is a fine estate about eighteen miles from

Tours, belonging to Monsieur de Margonne, a friend of our family. Honoré found there, at all times, the noblest hospitality joined to unvarying affection. With these friends he could have the tranquillity he could not have in Paris. At Angoulême and at Saché he wrote several of his books, more especially *Louis Lambert*, *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, and others I do not now recollect.

"Angoulême, 1832.

"Thank you, sister; the devotion of the hearts we love does us so much good! You have revived the energy which has enabled me, so far, to surmount the difficulties of my life. Yes, you are right; I shall not stop short; I shall advance, I shall attain my end; you will one day see me counted among the great minds of France. But what efforts to attain it! they wear out the body, weariness comes, discouragement follows!

"*Louis Lambert* has cost me such toil! how many books I have had to re-read in order to write this one book! Some day or other it may turn science into new paths. If I had made it a purely learned work it would have taken the attention of thinkers, who now will not even cast their eyes upon it. But, should chance ever place *Louis Lambert* in their hands they will speak of it, perhaps. I believe it to be a fine book. Our friends here admire it, and you know that they never deceive me. Why do you object to its ending? You know the reason why I chose it. You are always timid. This end is probable: many sad examples justify it; did not the doctor himself say that madness is at the door of great minds which overstrain themselves?

"Thanks again for your letter, and forgive a poor

artist for the discouragement which brought it forth. The game begun, I must play boldly; I must press on. My books are the only answer I will ever make to those who attack me. Do not let their criticisms affect you too much; they are a good augury; mediocrity is never attacked. Yes, you are right, my progress is a real one, and my infernal courage will be rewarded. Persuade my mother to think this, my dear sister; tell her from me to give me the charity of her patience. Such devotion will be counted to her. Some day, I hope, a little fame will repay all. Poor mother! that same imagination which she bestowed upon me drives her mind from north to south, and from south to north perpetually; such tossings to and fro are fatiguing; I know it well myself. Tell her I love her as I did when a child. Tears are in my eyes as I write these lines, — tears of tenderness and of despair. I think of the future; I must have my devoted mother with me in the day of my triumph; but when shall I win it? Take care of our mother, Laure, for the present and for the future.

"As for you and your husband, never doubt my heart. If I cannot write to you be indulgent, do not blame my silence; say to yourselves: 'He thinks of us;' understand me, my kind friends, you, my oldest and surest affections. Each time that I issue from my long meditations, my exhausting toil, I rest in your hearts as in some delightful spot where nothing wounds me. Some day when my work develops you will see how many hours were needed to think and write so many things; you will then absolve me for what may now displease you, and you will forgive the egoism, not of the man (for the man has none), but of the thinker and toiler.

"I kiss you, dear consoler who bring me hope, with a kiss of tender gratitude. Your letter revived me; after I had read it I gave a joyful hurrah and shouted, 'Forward, soldier! fling thyself boldly into the fray.'"

The reader will understand the emotions with which I received such letters as these.

In *Louis Lambert* my brother had felt obliged, in order to bring forward ideas which were not yet accepted, to put them under the safeguard of supposed madness. "And even so," he said to me, "I have not dared to give them all the extension that I see in them." Louis Lambert asks himself whether the constituent principle of electricity does not enter as a basis into the particular fluid from which Ideas spring. He saw in Thought a complete system, like one of Nature's kingdoms, a celestial flora, as it were, the development of which by some man of genius would be taken for the work of a lunatic. "Yes, all things within us and without us," said Louis Lambert, "bear evidence to the life of Ideas, — those ravishing creations which, obeying some mysterious revelation of their nature, I compare to flowers."

My brother returns in several of his works to this subject of meditation. In the *Peau de Chagrin*, among others, he analyzes the birth, life, or death of certain thoughts, — one of the most fascinating pages of that book.

Louis Lambert found in the moral nature phenomena of motion and gravity, similar to those of the physical nature, and demonstrated his opinion by certain examples.

"The emotion of *expectant attention*," he said, "is

painful through the effect of a law in virtue of which the weight of a body is multiplied by its swiftness. Does not the weight of sentiment, the moral gravity, which *waiting* produces, increase by the constant addition of past pains to present pain? To what if not to some electric substance can we attribute that magic by force of which the Will sits majestically enthroned in the eye, to blast all obstacles at the command of genius, or breaks forth in the voice, or filters visibly, in defiance of hypocrisy, through the human cuticle? The current of this king of fluids which, under the high pressure of Thought or Sentiment, flows forth in waves, lessens to a thread, or gathers to a volume and gushes out in lightning jets, is the occult minister to whom we owe the efforts (be they fatal or beneficent) of the arts and the passions, — the intonations of the voice, rough, sweet, terrifying, lascivious, horrible, seductive, which vibrate in the heart, in the bowels, in the brain at the will of our wishes, — the spell of touch, from which proceed the mental transfusions of the artist whose creative hands, made perfect through passionate study, can evoke nature, — the endless gradations of the eye, passing from sluggish atony to the discharge of lightning-flashes full of menace. God loses none of his rights in this system. Thought, material thought tells me of new and undiscovered grandeurs in the Divine."

I end my quotations; having merely wished to prove what I have advanced. The book alone can enable the reader to appreciate the heights of a spirit so ardent in seeking the solution of questions which occupy the minds of all thinkers. Let us return now to the realities of life and see if the man who in 1840 put the fol-

lowing words into the mouth of Z. Marcas (in a number of the "Revue Parisienne") was capable of judging of men and things: —

"'I do not believe that the present form of government will last ten years,' said Z. Marcas. 'The young blood which made August, 1830, and which is now forgotten, will burst forth like steam from the explosion of a boiler. That youth has no safety-valve in France to-day; it is gathering up an avalanche of rejected capacities and honorable but restless ambitions. What sound will it be that shakes these masses and puts them in motion? I know not; but they will rush like an avalanche on the present state of things and will overthrow it. The laws of ebb and flow rule the generations. The Roman empire had ignored them when the barbaric hordes came down. The barbarians of to-day are *intellects*. The laws of surplus are slowly and dumbly acting all about us. The government is the guilty one; it is not recognizing the two powers to which it owes all. It allows its hands to be tied by the absurdities of the Contrat, and it is now in a fair way to become a victim. Louis XIV., Napoleon, England, were and are eager to welcome intelligent youth. In France youth is now condemned to inactivity by the new legislation, by the fatal conditions of the elective principle, by the vicious theories of ministerial constitution. If you examine the composition of the elective Chamber you will find no deputies of thirty years of age. The youth of Richelieu and of Mazarin, of Turenne and Colbert, of Pitt and Saint Just, of Napoleon and Prince Metternich have no place there. Burke, Sheridan, and Fox cannot sit on its benches. . . . We

may conceive the causes of coming events, but we cannot predict what those events may be. At the present time everything is driving the youth of France to republicanism, because it sees in a republic its probable emancipation; it remembers the young generals and the young statesmen of the past. The imprudence of the present government is equalled only by its avarice. . . . France inferior before Russia and England! France in the third rank! They have given us peace by discounting the future,' he cried, 'but danger is ahead. The youth of France will rise as it did in 1790, and you will perish because you did not ask for its vigor and its energy, its devotion and its ardor; because you disliked young men of ability, and would not win the noble generation of the present day by love.'"

These words, written at a period when the reign of Louis-Philippe was in its highest prosperity, prove that Balzac saw far and judged from heights.

After *Louis Lambert* was finished my brother left Angoulême for Savoie. I find two letters from Aix-les-Bains which may be given; one to my mother, one to me: —

"Aix, Sept. 1st, 1832.

"I have felt the deepest emotion in reading your letter, mother, and I adore you. How and when shall I render, and can I ever render, back to you, in tenderness and comfort, all that you are doing for me? I can, at this time, offer you only my gratitude. The journey which you have enabled me to make is indeed very necessary to me; I was worn out with the labor of writing *Louis Lambert;* I had sat up many nights, and so abused the use of coffee that I suffered pains in

my stomach which amounted to cramp. *Louis Lambert* is, perhaps, a masterpiece, but it has cost me dear, — six weeks of unremitting labor at Saché, and ten days at Angoulême. Now then, perhaps, *certain friends* will think me a man of some value. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for relieving me of the worries of material life; my tenderness for you is not of those that words express. Such unceasing toil as mine must surely be crowned by fortune; I hope for it all the more because I see other talents rewarded. As for fame, I begin not to despair of it.

"Take care of your health, mother; you must live that I may pay you all. Oh, how I would kiss you if you were only here! What gratitude do I not feel for the kind hearts that pull some thorns from my life and smooth my path by their affection; though, forced to struggle incessantly against my lot, I have not always the time to express my feelings. But I will not now let a day go by without your knowing what tenderness this last devotion of yours excites in me. Mothers give birth to their children more than once, do they not, mother? Poor darlings! are you ever loved enough? Ah! could I but reward you some day with happiness, by gratifying your pride, and by my genius, for all the anguish that I have caused you.

"I am in a great vein of inspiration, and I hope to do much work here where I am tranquil. . . .

"A person just starting for Paris will bring you some manuscripts to take to Mame [his publisher]. Tell him he shall have *Les Chouans* re-written in February if he wishes to reprint it.

"I am writing, by way of amusement, some *contes*

drolatiques. Three are finished, and I am satisfied with them. I am also at work to supply the 'Revue de Paris' up to December, and I have articles in my head for January and February, which are really half done.

"Don't be uneasy about my leg. I have taken baths, and the scab is forming. I found a pretty room engaged for me which costs two francs a day. I get my meals from a neighboring restaurant. In the morning an egg and a glass of milk, a breakfast which comes to fifteen sous; dinner at the same rates. So you see, mother, that though you have a son who is rather a dreamer, he is at least economical.

"I press you in my arms and kiss those dear eyes that watch over me."

"Aix, September 15th.

"A word to you, my dearly beloved sister. In the course of my travels I have seen delightful places, I shall perhaps see lovelier still, and I want you to know that none of them can make me forget you.

"From my room I see the whole valley of Aix. On the horizon are hills, the high mountains of the Deut-du-Chat, and the exquisite lake of Bourget. But I must work in the midst of these enchantments. Mother has probably told you that I have to furnish forty pages a month to the 'Revue de Paris.'

"I am now between thirty and forty, dear sister; in other words, in the full maturity of my powers; I must now write on my noblest subjects which ought to crown my work. When I return I shall see if I have enough tranquillity of mind to attempt those great works.

"Mother will have told you that I came near being killed under the wheels of a diligence. I escaped with

an injury to the leg; but the baths and rest are curing it. Yesterday I was able to drive to the lake. Here I am at the gates of Italy and I fear lest I yield to the temptation of entering them. The journey would not be costly. I should go with the Fitz-James party, which would be most agreeable to me, for they are charming. I should travel in their carriage. All expenses calculated, it would cost a thousand francs to go from Geneva to Rome, and my quarter of that would be two hundred and fifty francs; I should need five hundred in Rome, and then I would spend the winter in Naples. But as I cannot touch my receipts in Paris, which must go to meet the notes, I should, if I decided to go to Italy, write the *Médecin de Campagne* for Mame at once, and that book would pay for all. I shall never have another such opportunity. The duke knows Italy and would save me all loss of time; persons ignorant of the country waste much in looking at useless things. I should work wherever I went. In Naples I should have the advantage of the embassy and the couriers of Monsieur de Rothschild, whose acquaintance I have made here, and who will give me introductions to his brother; my proofs can therefore come regularly and my work will go on as usual. Talk to my mother about this; and write to me in detail about all of you."

On further calculation the journey to Italy was considered too expensive; my brother did not allow himself to take it, but returned to Angoulême, where he finished *La Femme Abandonnée*, wrote *La Grenadière* and *Le Message*, and began *Le Médecin de Campagne*,

which he concluded in the rue Cassini, on his return to Paris.

Will the details I am now about to give interest the public? Affection makes me a poor judge of this question. I myself think them fitted to explain this many-sided character, in which the qualities of youth remained so long and resisted so much. This belief and the feeling that they cannot belittle Balzac makes me write down the following recollections fearlessly, one by one, as they come into my mind, remembering that he said himself it was "illusions that helped him to live."

To oblige himself to take the exercise necessary for his health in the midst of such a sedentary life, my brother corrected his proofs either at the printing-offices or at my house. According to the weather (which had great influence upon him), his immediate embarrassments, the difficulties of his work, or the extreme fatigue of sitting up all night, he often arrived scarcely able to drag himself along, gloomy and dejected, his skin looking sallow and jaundiced. Seeing his depressed state, I would try to find the means to draw him out of it. He, who could read thoughts, would answer mine before I spoke them.

"Don't console me," he would say in a faint voice, dropping into a chair; "it is useless. I am a dead man."

The dead man would then begin in a doleful voice to tell of his new troubles; but he soon revived, and the words came forth in the most ringing tones of his voice. Then, opening his proofs, he would drop back into his dismal accents, and say, by way of conclusion: —

"Yes, I am a wrecked man, sister."

"Nonsense! no man is wrecked with such proofs as those to correct."

Then he would raise his head; his face unpuckered, little by little; the sallow tones of his skin disappeared.

"By God, you are right!" he would cry. "Those books will make me live. Besides, blind Fortune is here, is n't she? why should n't she protect a Balzac as well as a ninny? — and there are always ways of wooing her. Suppose one of my millionnaire friends (and I have some) or a banker, not knowing what to do with his money, should come to me and say, 'I know your immense talents and your anxieties; you want such and such a sum to free yourself; accept it fearlessly; you will pay me; your pen is worth millions.' That is *all I want*, my dear."

Accustomed to such illusions, which revived his courage and his light-heartedness, I never showed any surprise at these suggestions. Having invented his fable, he would pile reasons upon reasons for believing it.

"Such men spend so much on mere fancies. A fine action is a fancy like any other, and it would give them actual joy all the time. What a thing to be able to say, 'I have saved a Balzac!' Humanity does, here and there, have good impulses, and there are persons who, without being Englishmen, are capable of such eccentricity. I shall meet with one," he cried; "millionnaire or banker, I shall find one!"

This belief established, he would walk up and down the room joyously, flinging up his arms and waving them.

"Ha! Balzac is a free man! You shall see, my dear friends and my dear enemies, how far he can go."

First, he went straight to the Institute. From there to the Chamber of Peers was but a step, and in he went. Why should n't he be a peer? *Such a one* and *such a one* were raised to the peerage. From peer he became minister, — nothing extraordinary in that, there were plenty of precedents; besides, are not the men who have gone the round of all ideas the ones best suited to govern men? Why should people be astonished at his taking a portfolio?

The minister then sat down to govern France; he pointed out and reformed many abuses. Noble ideas and language issued from his dream. Then, as all was highly prosperous in his ministry and in the kingdom, he reverted to the banker or his millionnaire friend who had led him to such honors, wishing to make sure that he, too, was as fortunate as himself: —

"His part will be a noble one in the future; the world will say, 'That man understood Balzac, lent him money on his talent, and led him to the honors he deserved.' That will be his glory, whoever else goes without. It is a higher distinction than burning a temple to leave your name to posterity."

When he had travelled far on his golden clouds he fell back into reality; but by that time his mind was diverted, and he was half consoled. He corrected his proofs, read them over to us, and departed with a joke at himself.

"Adieu; I am going home to see if my banker is waiting for me," he said, laughing his good, hearty laugh. "If he is not there I shall find work at any rate; and that 's my true banker."

His ardent spirit was constantly seeking means to

attain freedom from debt; and these efforts wearied him more than his literary labors.

One day, for instance, he thought he had discovered a substance suitable for the composition of a new kind of paper. This substance was everywhere, — cost less than rags. Here was joy, with many hopes and projects, quickly followed by disappointment, for the experiments did not succeed. We supposed he would be in despair, but we found him radiant.

"How about your paper?"

"Paper! I am not thinking of that. You people have never reflected that the Romans, who knew very little about mines, have left treasures in their scoriæ. Learned men in the Institute whom I have consulted think as I do, and I am going to Sardinia."

"Going to Sardinia? pray how are you going to pay your way?"

"Pay my way? I shall traverse the whole island on foot, with a bag on my back, dressed like a beggar. I shall scare the brigands, and the crows, too. I have made my calculations; six hundred francs will do it all."

The six hundred francs acquired, he departed, and wrote to us from Marseilles on the 20th of March, 1838: —

"Don't have any anxieties about me, mother; and tell Laure not to have any. I have enough money, and with due deference to *laurean* wisdom I shall not need any for my return. I have just spent four days and five nights in the imperial of a diligence. My hands are so swollen I can hardly write. To-morrow, Wednesday, at Toulon. Thursday I start for Ajaccio, and eight

days after that will be enough for my expedition. I could get to Sardinia from here for fifteen francs if I went by a trading vessel, but such craft take fifteen days for the trip, and it is near upon the equinox; whereas for — it is true — triple the amount I land there in three days. Now that I am almost there, I begin to have some doubts; but in any case, I could not risk less to have more. I have spent only ten francs on the way. I am in a hotel that makes me shudder, but with baths I manage to get along. If I fail, a few nights of hard work will restore the equilibrium! In one month I can scrape up plenty of money with my pen.

"Adieu, my dear, loved mother; believe that there is far more desire to end the sufferings of those who are dear to me than personal desire for fortune in what I am undertaking. When a man has no capital he can make his fortune only by ideas like the one I am now pursuing. Ever your respectful son."

It was good to hear him tell, on his return, of the vicissitudes of this remarkable journey. He had had the luck to encounter real brigands.

"And they are pretty good devils outside of their industry," he assured us; "they told me nearly all I wanted to know. Those fellows take the measure of everything, land and people both; they saw so plainly I was no fish for their net that I believe, God forgive me, they would sooner have lent me money than have asked for it."

He arrived at Bastia without a sou, but his name when he told it was the signal for an uprising among

the young men of the place. They had all read his books, and were filled with enthusiasm on seeing him. Great joy on his part! "I have a reputation already in Corsica," he said. "Ah! the brave youths, the fine country!" Received and fêted by Monsieur B., inspector of finances, whom he knew, he had won enough money at cards to pay for his return to France, at the very moment when he was going to write to us to send him some; he loved such pieces of luck, which made him think he had a star. But that was not all! this tramping through Sardinia and these buffetings at sea had given him subjects, and such subjects! The last surpassed all the others — unless we unwisely agreed with him; for then he asserted the excellence of the first. He related these new subjects with fire; plan, details, he had them all mapped out. "Pretty to do, is n't it?" he added.

"Do you tell your ideas to everybody?" I asked, rather frightened, for I knew that in the good republic of letters, where everybody wants to be king, they are not over-scrupulous as to rights of property.

"Why not?" he answered. "The subject is nothing, it is the execution that does the thing. Let them try to do Balzac; I defy them! Would thieves know how to work? And if they did, so much the better for the public; I should n't regret it, for I have plenty of other things in my mind. The world is vast, and the human brain is as vast as the world."

The specimens brought back from the mines were submitted to chemists. Time was needed to analyze them; moreover, Honoré was not yet ready to go to Piedmont and ask for a concession of the land; he had, as a pre-

liminary, to satisfy his publishers and earn the money for the journey.

He lived a whole year on this Sardinian fortune, and projects kept pace with it. He flew with outspread wings through a terrestrial Eden, which he arranged to his fancy; he bought the little château of Montcontour which he longed for in Touraine; for, in spite of the indifference his townspeople had shown to him, he loved the land, and wished to end his days there. "Gentle and tranquil thoughts grow in the soul as the vines in its soil," he said of it. There he proceeded to fancy himself resting from toil, living like an oyster in its shell, opening his being to the setting sun. He gilded this country life with the splendors of his mind, and transformed himself into his own Doctor Minoret in the midst of his friends, — the abbé, the mayor, and the justice of peace, — rejoicing in the same green old age which he has given him in *Ursule Mirouët*. But for all that, he said, he intended to guard his mind from growing rusty. He should come every winter to Paris, and have a salon like that of Baron Gérard (which was long the model of all salons, past, present, and to come, for the meeting of artists), and there he should receive, like Gérard, all the celebrities born to fame or to be born. He knew how to honor them properly, for did n't he know just the measure of the respect they deserved? Bah! he would even invite the critics. Yes, it was to be a place of general pacification, and this king in his own right was a hearty good fellow, who knew neither hatred nor jealousy. Then he could return to his solitude, beloved and blessed by all.

Such were his dreams!

But these dreams weighed on the hearts of his friends as much as his hours of depression; for they revealed the burden of his sorrows equally with his sadness. It was only in dreams that he could shake it off; no sooner was he awakened than he shouldered it again.

A year after his trip to Sardinia, my brother, having finished the books pledged to his publishers, and to reviews and newspapers, started for Piedmont to obtain the concession of his mine. Unreserved as ever, he had told the purpose of his journey to the Genoese captain who took him to Sardinia the previous year. The following letter explains how the captain profited by that confidence, to Honoré's detriment.

"Milan.

"Dear Sister, — It would be too long to write all that I will tell you when I see you, which will be soon, I hope. I am, after very fatiguing travels, kept here for the interests of the Visconti family. Politics have so embroiled them that the remnants of their property in this country would have been sequestrated without certain efforts on my part which have happily succeeded.

"As to the principal object of my journey, all happened as I expected, but the delay in my coming was fatal. That Genoese captain has obtained a concession in proper form from the court of Sardinia. There is over a million of money in the scoriæ and the lead mines. A house in Marseilles with whom he has an agreement has had the ore assayed. I ought not to have loosened my grip on the enterprise last year, and so let them get before me. . . ."

Being myself absent from Paris in October of the same year, I received the following letter from my brother:

"Gone without a word! the poor toiler went to find you and make you share a little joy, and he found no sister! I torment you so often with my troubles that the least I can do is to write you my little joy. You won't laugh at me, you 'll believe me, dear — *you* will.

"I went yesterday to Gérard's; he presented me to three German families. I thought I was dreaming; three families! no less. One was from Vienna, one from Frankfort, and the third — Prussia, perhaps; but I don't rightly know where. They confided to me that they had been to Gérard's faithfully for one whole month in the hope of meeting me; and they let me know that beyond the frontier of France (dear, ungrateful country!) my reputation has begun. 'Persevere in your labors,' they added, 'and you will be at the head of literature in Europe.' Europe! they said it, sister! Flattering families! Oh, how I could make certain persons roar with laughter if I told them that. But these were good, kind Germans, and I let myself believe they thought what they said, and, to tell the truth, I 'd have listened to them all night. Praise is such a blessing to us artists, and that of the good Germans primed me with courage. I departed, gay as a lark, from Gérard's, and I am going to fire three guns on the public and on my detractors; to wit, *Eugénie Grandet*, *Les Aventures d'une Idée heureuse*, which you know about, and my *Prêtre catholique*, one of the finest of my subjects.

"The matter of the *Études de Mœurs* is well under way. Thirty-three thousand francs for author's rights in the reprints will stop up large holes. That slice of my debts paid, I shall go and seek my reward at Geneva. The horizon seems really brightening. I have begun hard work again. I go to bed at six, directly after dinner. The animal digests and sleeps till midnight. Then Auguste makes me a cup of coffee on which the mind works with a steady flow till midday. After that I rush to the printing-office to take my copy and get my proofs, which gives exercise to the animal, who dreams as he goes.

"I can put a good deal of black on white, little sister, in twelve hours; and after a month of such life there's not a little earned. Poor pen! it must be made of diamond not to be worn out long ago. To lift its master to reputation (according to the Germans) to enable him to pay his debts to all, and then to give him, some day, rest upon a mountain — that is its task.

"What the devil were you doing so late at M—— ? Tell me all about it — and tell me too that these Germans of mine are worthy people. A fraternal handshake for Monsieur Canal. Tell him that the *Aventures d'une Idée heureuse* [Adventures of a good Idea] are on the ways. I send you proofs of the *Médecin de Campagne.*"

The *Aventures d'une Idée heureuse* and the *Prêtre Catholique* were never written. The subject of the first of these books was inspired by the ill-luck of a great work with which his brother-in-law, Monsieur Surville, was concerned. Honoré intended, in this book, to write the

history of a good idea useful to all, brought to nought by the individual interests with which it clashed, — thus causing the ruin of a man who had devoted himself to bring it about. The subject under my brother's pen would have been fruitful in observation and in social truths; it would certainly not have been the least interesting of the books comprised in his work.

Prior to the journey to Switzerland and Geneva to which my brother alludes in the foregoing letters, I find another letter which he addressed to me during one of my absences from Paris, which it may be interesting to give here: —

"I have good news for you, little sister; the reviews are paying me better prices. Hey! hey!

"Werdet announces that my *Médecin de Campagne* was sold off in eight days. Ha! ha!

"I have enough money to meet the notes of November and December, which made you so uneasy. Ho! ho!

"I have sold the reprinting of the books by that rascal R——, Saint A., and other pseudonyms. The sale is made through a third party, who denies the authorship; *for I will never admit it.* But as they are reprinting them in that damned Belgium, which does so much harm, both to authors and publishers, I yield to the necessity of exchanging these books for good coin, and in that way I lessen the mischief.

"And, finally, Gosselin publishes my *Contes Drolatiques. Ecco, sorella!*

"All goes well. A few more efforts and I shall have triumphed in a great struggle by means of a feeble in-

strument — a pen! If nothing happens to prevent it, I shall soon owe nothing to any one except my mother; and when I remember my disasters and the gloomy years I have passed through, I cannot help feeling some pride in thinking that by dint of courage and of toil I have won my liberty.

"This thought has made me so happy that the other night I talked of a project to Surville in which you were concerned. I made him build a house close to mine; our gardens adjoined; we ate the fruits of our trees together — I went far! The good brother smiled, and raised his eyes to heaven; there was a world of affection for you and for me in that smile; but I also saw in it that neither he nor I owned our houses as yet. Never mind, projects sustain the courage, and if God grants me health, we will have our houses, my good sister."

This "project" afterwards led him to purchase a piece of ground at Ville-d'Avray, where he built Les Jardies. But the steep slope made the walls unsafe; the property cost more than it ought to have done; and other unfortunate circumstances obliged my brother to sell it. This purchase was also counted against him as a fault.

In the foregoing letter Honoré alludes to the *Contes Drolatiques*, which he said in a former letter he was writing "for relaxation." In these stories he intended to follow the transformations of the French language from the times of Rabelais to the present day, and thus impregnate his tales with the ideas of the various epochs.

"It will be with this work as with the *Comédie Humaine*," he said to us; "the public will not understand its purpose until the work is finished. Until then these stories will only be recreation for artists. In them they'll find the gayety they are often so much in need of."

He also thought that if everything else failed these stories might save him from oblivion. The studies he then made of the old French writers led him to regret the desuetude of certain words which had never been replaced. He grieved over their fate as Vangelas might have done.

"What charming words! don't they express exactly what they want to say? What artless grace! You find such words only in the infancy of a language. Now a days we have to use phrases to replace them. When I work at the dictionary of the Academy . . ."

And that idea flung him into projects in which the French language became his millionnaire. He was apt at such times to get angry with those who found fault with him for creating certain words which he wanted in his books.

"Who has the right to make gifts to a language if not a writer?" he would say; "our language has accepted those of my predecessors, and she will accept mine; my parvenus will become noble in time — which makes all nobilities. However, let the critics yelp over my 'neologisms' as they call them; everybody must live, you know."

CHAPTER V.

EARLY MANHOOD.

In reading the foregoing portion of Madame Surville's narrative, an impression is left upon the mind that more has been omitted than is told. Those were the years of his youth and early manhood, yet his sister tells us little of his actual life, his thoughts on external things, his relation to them; above all, nothing of the inner man that was formed and being formed within him. If we turn to his correspondence, we find but two letters between the years 1822 and 1828, and those of no interest. It is evident that these omissions are intentional. If it was Balzac's will (as it appears to have been) to withhold his private life and motives and incentives from public knowledge, we can only be glad that he foresaw the gossiping curiosity of a coming literary future, and kept that which was sacred to him from being trailed in the dust. But without attempting to pry into the life which he concealed (in fact there are no means of doing so), it is the right of posterity to judge a man by his utterances; and Balzac's works, into which he put much of himself, together with a few stray glimpses given here and there in his letters of a later date, do throw some light upon his early manhood.

But before passing to these more difficult matters it is well to see if Balzac's life after he left his father's house at Villeparisis and became connected with men and things in Paris, can be reduced to a chronology, however incomplete. All accounts of him are vague in this respect, often skipping years in the narration and returning to them later. But by comparing the different sources of information it is possible to get some connected idea of his outward life.

Balzac himself said in after years: "When I was quite a young man I had an illness from which persons do not recover; nineteen out of twenty die. Dr. Nacquart said, 'If he gets well now he may live a hundred years.' I did get well, and I went to work; I wrote novels for mere study; one to break myself in to dialogue; another to practise description; a third to group my personages, and so on." He frequently alludes to the fact that Dr. Nacquart saved his life. This illness, doubtless the heart disease which he mentions to George Sand in 1831, and to which his sister alludes as the result of a great mental shock, must have occurred during the first of these years of which there is no record.

In 1824–25, the period of his venture as a publisher, we find that he wrote three of the ten novels he never acknowledged, the last of which was issued by Urbain Canel, a publisher of some repute; also three pamphlets, *Le Droit d'Ainesse*, *Une Histoire Impartiale des Jésuites*, and *La Code des Gens honnêtes.* Champfleury, who was employed by the Lévy Frères to collect Balzac's signed writings under the title of *Œuvres diverses*, mentions that throughout the vicissitudes of his life and his many changes of abode, Bal-

zac had preserved a number of boxes (*cartons*) full of youthful writings of little interest, which he had probably never re-read, — the sort of papers which most men tear up at intervals or consign to the flames, but which Balzac had kept from some feeling or association. Among them there was neither correspondence, nor journal, nor any paper serviceable to a biographer; and, curiously enough, many were in verse, for which he had apparently not the slightest faculty. Champfleury says, however, that from the specimens he found it might be asserted that if Balzac had turned his mind to poetry he could have been one of the poets of the epoch, on a level with Victor Hugo and Lamartine. Balzac's own judgment in the matter is probably nearer the truth. It is told that Madame de Girardin, being dilatory in writing a sonnet for *Les Illusions Perdues*, the printer's devil, who had been sent for it in vain, seeing Balzac's extreme annoyance at the delay, said to him, not unnaturally, "Why don't you write it yourself, Monsieur de Balzac?" "Write it myself!" cried Balzac, turning on him; "don't you know, wretched boy, that it is utterly impossible for me to write a sonnet?"

During the two years from August, 1826, to September, 1828, when Balzac carried on the printing business, first alone and then in partnership with his foreman, Barbier, he took all work that came to him, and his name as printer is attached to the following books (among others): the works of Lesage, the third edition of Madame Roland's "Memoirs," the works of Volney, M. de Vigny's "Cinq-Mars," several novels by Zschokke, and an amusing little pamphlet of his own, *Le Petit*

Dictionnaire des Enseignes de Paris. He also printed and published the works of Molière complete in one volume, with an introduction by himself; and he published in the same form, but did not print, the works of La Fontaine, also with an introduction; these Introductions are now among his collected writings. He did not print the edition of La Fontaine, which is an illustrated *édition de luxe*, because the establishment when he bought it was in bad condition, and he had, as we have seen, no money left out of his thirty thousand francs to better it, — scarcely enough, in fact, to carry it on. This was the chief cause of his failure. After he sold the business in September, 1828, it went into hands that could command more capital, became remunerative, and was still in a prosperous condition some years after Balzac's death.

When he left the printing-office in the Marais he took a single room in the rue de Tournon, No. 2, where he must have struggled for a time with the wolf at his door. But the worst had come, and things were about to mend. Outward and material circumstances were still against him, and continued to be so, under various phases, all his life; but at last he had conquered, in some degree at least, his own difficulties of form and construction; he was becoming able, by dint of perseverance and hard work, to present his thought in a manner that satisfied him. He now finished *Les Chouans*, which was published under his own name, by Canel and Levavasseur, in March, 1829. During this time (for he had the habit all through life of making his books long before he wrote them) another book must have lain, inchoate, in his mind, taken from his

own heart and experience, — *César Birotteau.* He knew, none better, the anguish of that upright soul in the very circumstances he has given under the guise of fiction.

Les Chouans was the turning-point of his literary career. He became known. Editors went to him for articles; publishers offered to take his books. The following is a list of the novels and tales written by him during the years 1829 and 1830. They now hold their appropriate place in the *Comédie Humaine: El Verdugo; La Paix du Ménage; Gloire et Malheur* (*Maison du Chat-qui-pelote*); *Le Bal de Sceaux;* part of *Cathérine de Médicis; Physiologie du mariage; Gobseck; La Vendetta; Étude de femme; Une double famille; Adieu; L'Élixir de longue vie;* part of *Les petites Misères de la vie conjugale; Une Passion dans le désert; Un Épisode sous la Terreur; Jésus-Christ en Flandres.*[1]

The first fruit of Balzac's dawning reputation was an introduction to Émile de Girardin (then editor of "La Mode"), through M. Alphonse Levavasseur, partner of Urbain Canel. M. de Girardin states that Balzac gave him a story entitled *El Verdugo*, which he printed in "La Mode," that publication being the first to ac-

[1] In an appendix will be found lists of Balzac's works so arranged as to be useful to the American reader. They do not pretend to be full bibliographical lists of all Balzac's works; for that students must go to the source whence they are taken, — to the fountain head, namely: Histoire des Œuvres de H. de Balzac, par le Vte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, 3me éd. Paris, Calmann Lévy, 1888; a work which covers the whole ground, and is, while strictly bibliographical, a monument of love, comprehension, and fidelity.

cept his work. This introduction probably did more than anything else to bring Balzac into connection with the literary and other talent of that day. The salon of Madame Sophie Gay, Madame de Girardin's mother, had long been a centre of various interests. It was a refuge under the Empire for stubborn aristocrats, and in later years for the eager young blood of the day, literary and artistic, which was troubled with a sense of its lack of opportunity. In 1830 these interests had the common ground of dislike to the bourgeois dynasty; poets, painters, and musicians, publicists, politicians, and beautiful and brilliant women met in Madame Gay's salon to contribute their part to that intercourse of talents, and do their best to shine. There Balzac, who already knew something of society and of well-bred women in his mother's house, was brought into familiar intercourse with such persons as Victor Hugo, de Vigny, Lamartine, and Frédéric Soulié, Horace Vernet and Baron Gérard, Rossini, then in the fame of his last opera, Guillaume Tell, Auber, Meyerbeer, Malibran and Duprez, the Duc de Broglie and Thiers, Madame Tallien and Madame Recamier in their last years, George Sand in her dawn; also Henri de la Touche, editor of the "Figaro," whom Delphine de Girardin called her intimate enemy, together with many younger literary men and journalists of his own age. Every one did his or her share towards the brilliancy of these evenings, among them Balzac, who, on one occasion, read the *Peau de Chagrin* aloud to the company. From this time till his death Madame de Girardin was among his stanchest friends; she did as much justice as could be done in those days to his great powers, and she

stood by him loyally, both in private and in the columns of the "Presse" (her husband's paper), long after Balzac had quarrelled with de Girardin on a business matter, and had ceased to go to her house.

In the same year, 1830, he combined with Émile de Girardin, Victor Varaignes, Hippolite Auger, and Bois-le-Comte, to found a weekly paper called the "Feuilleton des Journaux politiques," which was intended to supplement the purely political newspapers, and to be "specially devoted to the presentation and criticism of literary works and art productions." The publication was short-lived, but Balzac contributed many articles to it; also to the "Silhouette," edited by Victor Ratier, and to the "Caricature," a spicy semi-political paper, edited by M. Philippon, and devoted more especially to satirical attacks on the Bourgeois régime. Balzac did much work for it, thus serving an apprenticeship at inner journalism, which he afterwards put to use in *Les Illusions Perdues*, and in his witty pamphlet *Le Monographie de la Presse Parisienne.* He did not like the press, but it was on other than merely personal grounds. "It is not a dynasty, nor a Chamber, nor a system that rules France at this date," he says; "it is a terrible power — Public Opinion. And who are making Opinion? The newspapers. And who make the newspapers? Writers, for the most part third-rate: for great as the mediocrity of Court, Chamber, and diplomats may be, the mediocrity of the writers and proprietors who engineer the French newspaper press (all obscure men without initiative or purpose, used-up by their own engine) is greater still." Later, he admits its power. "I don't like journalism; I may say I hate

it. It is a blind force, sly, malicious, insubordinate, without morality or tradition, without, you may say, an aim. But, at any rate, we have got to bow to it. It is a power, — the power of this century. It leads to all points of the circumference. It is the only power in these days that has the force to overthrow, and, consequently, to set up. Just see what the 'Débats,' the 'Constitutionel,' the 'Presse,' and even the 'Siècle,' can do in their several ways. I defy the government to name a minister, or a collector, or an admiral, or a forester without more or less considering the effect it will have on the sensitive skin of the press." He soon began to tire of the tone of the "Caricature," and to gird against weekly articles in derision of the king and "le grand poulot" (the Duc d'Orléans). At the end of ten months he declared he had had enough of it, and that true criticism did not exist in France. All his articles of whatever kind have been collected since his death, and published among the "Œuvres Diverses." He would probably not have sanctioned the publication of all of them under his name; for he practised criticism as he practised novel-writing, to train his hand and feel his way.

At the close of the year 1830 he began to write for the "Revue de Paris," then edited by Charles Rabou, but soon to pass into the hands of Buloz, also editor of the "Revue des Deux Mondes." Thus, in the course of this one year, Balzac was fairly launched upon the surface current of his chosen career.

In May, 1831, he left his poor room in the rue de Tournon, and took a sunny little apartment in the rue Cassini, near the Observatoire, where he remained

eight years. It was the fitting up of this cheerful abode with blue cambric (saved from the printing-office) which drew upon him his mother's reproaches ; and even Monsieur Taine cannot refrain from remarking on the love of luxury which lusted for two blue screens made by his sister, presumably to match the hangings. It does not seem a heinous offence worth indicating to posterity, and his sister could little have expected that her innocent story would be so applied ; but the charge was a true one. Hard as he worked to pay his debts (always his first object), and poorly as he lived, often going without the necessaries of life, he could not restrain his longing for rare old things of art, and beautiful decorations. George Sand said of him that he was "envious of a *bibelot* and incapable of envying another man's fame ;" and this passion, which he was unable to resist, and probably never attempted to, increased his debts and added to the millstone already about his neck. He was aware of his weakness, however, and was wont, at times, to hide his treasures from his friends as well as from his creditors. A catalogue of his rare works of art of all kinds, and a description of his gallery in the Rue Fortunée (his last home) is given in *Cousin Pons,* a book which reveals, no doubt, in the person of the old collector, some of his own methods in obtaining those treasures.

In the rue Cassini he became intimate with two men living in the same house, — Jules Sandeau and Henri de la Touche ; the latter was then editing the "Figaro," which he chiefly wrote himself. Many years earlier la Touche had brought forward André Chénier, and he was now among the first to advise and assist George

Sand, then his secretary. He was a man of much literary importance, which came to naught owing to the strange capriciousness of his nature. George Sand said of him that he had shown the promised land to others, but was unable to enter Canaan himself. She was just then trying her wings before writing "Indiana," and it was at this time that Jules Sandeau presented Balzac to her. Her account of their acquaintance and her judgment upon him will be given farther on, — the actual words of such contemporaries as George Sand and Théophile Gautier being far more useful to the reader than any synopsis made by others.

From this time on we may see the man of strict honor and integrity applying himself to the payment of his debts and the earning of a competency, the need of which he now began to feel keenly, as he entered more and more into the social life it was his destiny to paint. These were his first objects as seen by the general eye; but there was a higher law within him, namely, the development of his own powers, and nothing was suffered to interfere with it, — neither pressure of outward cares, nor remonstrances of angry publishers, nor temptations of friendship and pleasure (strong in his loving and joyous nature), nor the sense of his incompetency in certain ways of putting into form his thought. He never trifled with his genius, the sacred gift which he recognized as a lad in his cage at Vendôme. He obeyed the inspiration that came to him to train it to its highest service; he cloistered his spirit for weeks and months, wrestling in the silence and solitude of night to bring his great powers within control. There lay his real life; a life of which he gives but few glimpses and no par-

ticulars; a solitary life, possibly typified to his mind by the dress he wore. Scarcely any record is left of it except in the books which issued from its solitude; but they reveal much. A man less sound in body and mind would have had no outward life; his nervous system, as we now say of an overtaxed mind and body, would have broken down; or he would at least have been inert and irritable. But Balzac's healthy and hearty nature came to the fore so soon as the strain was over; no sooner had he touched earth than the giant sprang up refreshed, and took his place among the men and events of the day as if no other life were in his thoughts.

Lamartine gives a portrait of him at this time which is doubtless a true one. He says that he returned to Paris after an absence of years, knowing only that a young writer named Balzac was said to show a healthy originality. He chanced to read a few pages of his writings, which moved him to exclaim, "A man is born to us!" Soon after this he met him at dinner at Madame de Girardin's."

"Balzac was standing before the fireplace of that dear room where I have seen so many remarkable men and women come and go. He was not tall, though the light on his face and the mobility of his figure prevented me from noticing his stature. His body swayed with his thought; there seemed at times to be a space between him and the floor; occasionally he stooped as though to gather an idea at his feet, and then he rose on the points of them to follow the flight of his thought above him. At the moment of my entrance he was carried away by the subject of a conversation then go-

ing on with Monsieur and Madame de Girardin, and only interrupted himself for a moment to give me a keen, rapid, gracious look of extreme kindliness.

"He was stout, solid, square at the base and across the shoulders. The neck, chest, body, and thighs were powerful, with something of Mirabeau's amplitude, but without heaviness. The soul was apparent, and seemed to carry everything lightly, gayly, like a supple covering, not in the least like a burden. His size seemed to give him power, not to deprive him of it. His short arms gesticulated easily; he talked as an orator speaks. His voice resounded with the somewhat vehement energy of his lungs, but it had neither roughness, nor sarcasm, nor anger in it; his legs, on which he rather swayed himself, bore the torso easily; his hands, which were large and plump, expressed his thought as he waved them. Such was the outward man in that robust frame. But in presence of the face it was difficult to think of the structure. That speaking face, from which it was not easy to remove one's eyes, charmed and fascinated you; his hair was worn in thick masses; his black eyes pierced you like darts dipped in kindliness; they entered confidingly into yours like friends. His cheeks were full and ruddy; the nose well modelled, though rather long; the lips finely outlined, but full and raised at the corners; the teeth irregular and notched. His head was apt to lean to one side, and then, when the talk excited him, it was lifted quickly with an heroic sort of pride. But the dominant expression of his face, greater even than that of intellect, was the manifestation of goodness and kindheartedness. He won your mind when he spoke, but he won your heart when he

was silent. No feeling of envy or hatred could have been expressed by that face; it was impossible that it should seem otherwise than kind. But the kindness was not that of indifference; it was loving kindness, conscious of its meaning and conscious of others; it inspired gratitude and frankness, and defied all those who knew him not to love him. A childlike merriment was in his aspect; here was a soul at play; he had dropped his pen to be happy among friends, and it was impossible not to be joyous where he was."

During the summers he went into the country, staying chiefly with friends of his family who were also devoted friends of his own: Madame Carrand at Angoulême, Monsieur de Margonne of Saché, near Tours, Madame de Berny at Saint-Firmin. Some of his noblest books were written at Angoulême and Saché. These were pleasures that cost him little, but his first journey into other lands, in September, 1832, was another thing, and it is touching to see the gratitude with which he thanks his mother (in the letter his sister quotes) for affording him that pleasure.

By this time his literary success and his personal qualities had brought him into social life. With the Duchesse d'Abrantès (better known as Madame Junot), a friend of his sister, he was already intimate. Many of his letters to her, beginning in 1828, are given in his correspondence. They are frank and friendly; at first they relate chiefly to herself and her books, in the publication of which he seems to have assisted; later he tells of his own work and discusses subjects. The tone is sincere and affectionate, and grateful for her regard for him. "The friendship you deign to offer me," he

writes, "is a chimera long sought by me; from my earliest days in college I have desired to possess, not many friends, but a friend (*un ami*). . . . You are unhappy, you say, and without the hope of another dawn; but remember that in the soul are many spring-tides and fresh mornings. Your past life cannot be characterized in language; it is now a memory, and you cannot judge of the future by such a past. How many human beings have renewed their lives and made them beautiful and sweet when farther on in life than you are now. All we are is in the soul; are you certain that yours has had its full development? do you breathe-in air through every pore of it? do your eyes see all they can see?" Of himself he says: "I am old in suffering; you would not guess my age from my lively face. I cannot say that I have had, like you, reverses, for I have always been bowed down beneath a cruel weight. Perhaps this will seem to you exaggeration, a method of obtaining your interest; no, for nothing can give you an idea of my life up to my twenty-third year. I am sometimes surprised that I have nothing now to struggle against but outward misfortune. You may question all about me and you will never gain any light on the cause of my unhappiness. Some there are who die and the physician himself is unable to discover what malady has carried them off."

During these years, beginning with 1831, many women of rank and distinction, as well as others in humble life, wrote to him anonymously, impelled to do so by their interest in his books. "A cloud of letters" are still in existence, but they tell nothing; they are

not the letters of women who had a part, either great or small, in his time or in his thoughts. From these must be distinguished the anonymous letters of three women, two of whom had an ultimate influence on his life. His answers to the third (who signed herself Louise) are given in his correspondence. It is characteristic of his nature that although these letters to Louise covered a period of two years, and the lady's name was not revealed to him, yet, having on one occasion the opportunity to discover who she was, his delicate sense of honor led him to forego it.[1] Madame Hanska, *née* Comtesse Rzewuska, who seventeen years later became his wife, wrote to him in 1832, after reading the *Médecin de Campagne*, and signed herself "l'Étrangère." She was a Pole by birth, married to a Russian gentleman owning vast possessions in the province of Kiew, where the family usually resided on an estate named Wierzschovnia, which was more like a small principality than the home of private persons. Monsieur Hanski, being very much older than his wife, and greatly occupied with the care of his property, allowed her, from time to time, to travel without him for the purpose of educating their only child, a daughter. Her intercourse with Balzac, begun by letter in 1832, and strengthened by occasional meetings in Vienna and elsewhere, continued in a friendly manner but with

[1] It must be said, however, that the letters to Louise have an artificial ring to them. The reader cannot help asking how they came to be published. As the lady never made herself known to Balzac, is it likely that she sent his letters to the publishers of his *Correspondance?* Can they have been intended for incorporation with some tale left unfinished among his papers?

some relaxation on his part between 1838 and 1843, the period of Monsieur Hanski's death, after which time it grew closer, and ended in being the abiding and final influence on his life. To his later years the history of what she was to him properly belongs.

The other anonymous correspondent, of 1831, proved to be the Duchesse de Castries, daughter of the Duc de Mailly, a relation of the Fitz-Jameses and the Montmorencys, and all the bluest blood of the faubourg Saint-Germain. She was parted from her husband and lived an artificial life, which was made picturesque by a semi-invalidism caused by a fall from her horse and a consequent injury to the spine. She received her friends lying on a reclining chair in a small salon full of antique furniture, old velvet cushions, and screens of the seventeenth century. She was about thirty years of age; her beauty, more Roman than Greek, was noble and distinguished; her high, white forehead, crowned with auburn hair, and the ruby-colored gown she was fond of wearing made her the living presentation of a portrait by Titian.

There is no doubt that Madame de Castries had a marked influence, though it cannot be called an important one, on Balzac's life. She was of great service to his work, for she brought him into the sphere of the faubourg Saint-Germain, and made known to him its manners and customs, just as Madame Gay and Madame d'Abrantès had been the means of revealing to him the Directory and the Empire. Moreover she affected his imagination and gratified his naturally artistic taste. The journey to Switzerland was made at her suggestion. She was then on her way to Italy

with her brother-in-law, the Duc de Fitz-James, and his wife. Madame Surville has told us that her brother was unable to accept their proposal to go with them to Italy on account of the expense; others have said that the real cause was a rupture between the duchess and Balzac at Geneva, where they parted. This may be, but it would seem from the correspondence that his feelings cooled gradually; they did cool undoubtedly (though not without suffering on his part), so that later, when Madame de Castries evidently wished to replace the intimacy on its old footing, he replied to her curtly, though with courtesy. The *Duchesse de Langeais*, with its admirable sketch of the faubourg Saint-Germain, is, by his own admission, derived from his intercourse with Madame de Castries. In a letter to Madame Carraud, dated from Saché, July 1832, not long before he starts for Aix, he speaks freely of his relations to the duchess: —

"Ah, if they would only have gone to the Pyrenees, I could have stopped to see you on the way; but no, it is decreed that I must climb to Aix in Savoie after one of those aristocratic women whom you, no doubt, hold in horror; the sort of angelic beauty to whom we attribute a noble soul; a true duchess, very disdainful, very loving, elegant, coquettish, and witty, — like nothing I have before seen; a phenomenon of the sort that are fast disappearing; who says she loves me, who wishes me to stay with her in a Venetian palace (you see I tell you all), and who insists that I am to write nothing that is not for her; one of those women whom we are compelled to adore upon our knees if they choose that we shall do so; and whom it is such a pleasure to

conquer, — the woman of dreams, jealous of everything. Ah! how much better I should be at Angoulême, very sage, very tranquil, listening to the whirr of the mill-wheels, muddying my hands in gathering truffles, learning of you to pocket billiard-balls, and laughing and talking."

Later he writes from Aix, still to Madame Carraud:

"I came here to find little and much. Much, because I am with an amiable and graceful woman; little, because she will never love me. Why did you send me to Aix? From my little room I see the whole valley; I get up pitilessly at five, and work before my window till half-past five at night. My breakfast, an egg, comes from the club. Madame de Castries sends me coffee. She is the type of refined women, more so than Madame de Beauséant. But is not the charm of these women cultivated at the expense of the heart? . . . As I came through Lyon I found the proofs of *Louis Lambert*, and, like a bear, I licked my cub."

It was during the period of their intimacy that Balzac became, or attempted to become, a man of fashion. He bought horses and a tilbury, and was seen in the Bois wearing handsome clothes and accompanied by a little groom called "Grain-de-mil." But this extravagance lasted only a year or two. The horses were first sold to save oats, then the tilbury; but the coat, which was blue with brass buttons, must have lasted longer, for it appears in several of the satirical tales of the day.

The following letters are to Madame de Castries, whom he did not meet personally till March, 1832:

"PARIS, Oct. 5, 1831.

"MADAME, — Your letter was sent to Touraine after my return, and as I crossed my correspondence on the way I have only just received it. Do not think me guilty of negligence. You attribute so many crimes to me that I must defend myself from the suspicion of discourtesy to a lady, even though she be unknown to me.

"Permit me to use some frankness in replying to your frank attacks, and, above all, accept my sincere thanks for the indirect flattery of your criticisms, for they reveal to me the strong impression my works have made upon you. You place me in the unfortunate position of speaking about myself, and that is the more embarrassing because I address a lady whose age and condition are unknown to me.

"The *Physiologie du Mariage*, Madame, is a work undertaken in behalf of women. I saw plainly that if, in order to spread ideas looking to the emancipation of women and their higher education, I began in a commonplace manner by announcing my purpose, I should merely be regarded as the ingenious author of a theory that was more or less fanciful. It was evident that I ought to envelop my ideas, and mould them, as it were, in some new form, either bitter or piquant, which should awaken minds and give them reflections to think upon. For a woman who has passed through the storms of life the meaning of my book will be seen to be the attribution to husbands of all the faults committed by wives, — it is, in short, a great absolution. Next, I put forward the natural and inalienable rights of women. No happy marriage is possible if a perfect knowledge of each other's moral nature, habits, and character does

not exist between a man and woman before their union, and I have not shrunk from any of the consequences of that principle. Those who know me know that I have been faithful to that belief from my earliest years. . . .

"Thus you see, Madame, that I have changed the first crime you charge upon me into a brave effort which ought to have won me some encouragement; but, soldier as I am at the outposts of a future system, I meet the fate of all such sentinels. I am misjudged, misunderstood. Some see only the form; others see nothing at all. I shall die in my idea like the soldier in his cloak.

"Immediately after writing the *Physiologie* I wrote, in order to develop my thoughts and cast them into young minds by means of striking pictures, the *Scènes de la vie privée*. In that book, full of morality and wise counsel, nothing is destroyed, nothing is attacked; I respect beliefs, even those I do not share. I am simply the historian, the narrator, and never was virtue more held up for reverence than in those pages. And now, Madame, since you oblige me to defend the *Peau de Chagrin*, I shall do it in one word: the work is not yet finished. . . .

"*Jésus-Christ en Flandres*, *L'Enfant Maudit*, *Les Proscrits*, and other of my writings, will prove to you that I do not lack faith, nor conviction, nor charity. I plough my furrow conscientiously; I try to be the man of my subject, and to do my work with courage and preseverance, that is all. The *Peau de Chagrin* is intended to portray the present age, our life, our egotism; this representation of our types has been misunderstood. But my consolation, Madame, will ever be in the sincere

interest that has brought me criticisms made, like yours, in good faith and in a friendly manner. Therefore believe me when I say that your letter, so full of touching sentiments worthy of a woman's heart, is not indifferent to me; such far-off sympathy thus excited is a treasure, — my only fortune, my purest pleasure. But the pleasure you have given would be greater still if, instead of dwelling chiefly on the necessitated picture of a woman famous for never having loved, you had turned to her who is sanctified through the noblest devotion of womanhood, through her artless love and the rich poetry of her heart. For me Pauline lives — even more beautiful. If I have made her a vision, an illusion, it is that none may possess my secret. . . . "

"March, 1834.

"*Seraphita* is advancing; she will appear at the end of the month. The work has been crushing, terrible. I have worked, and shall work night and day over it. I have made, unmade, remade it; and as in Paris ridicule usually takes the place of comprehension, I hope for nothing but a far-off, tardy success. The book will be appreciated in the future, and here and there even now. It will be the book of souls who love to lose themselves in the spaces of the Infinite. There is a chapter, the sixth, the Path to Heaven, which will give me, forever, all truly pious souls.

"Why do you think I am still in the rue Cassini? I am nearer or farther from you than that, according to the fancy of the moment. I do not like your sadness; I should scold you if you were here; I should pose you on a large sofa where you would sit like a fairy in the midst of her palace, and I should tell you that to live

in this life we must love, and that you do not love. A deep affection is the bread of the soul; when the soul is not fed it weakens like the body. . . .

"I went out yesterday and saw the two caricatures of me by Dantan. Send to Susse for them, and you will see how droll they are. Next week I sit for my picture to please a painter, who asked to do it, and I weakly consented. All this is very petty, is it not? it seems the more so to one who has risen with the mystics to the skies.

"The noble figure of womanhood which I promised in the preface, and which piques your curiosity, is half done. The book is called *Le Lys dans la Vallée.* I may be wrong, but I think it will cause the shedding of many tears. I know that in writing it I have shed many myself."

"October 5, 1835.

"Madame. — My doctor imperatively ordered change of air; I left all letters behind me, and started for Touraine. On my return I found the two you have written to me, also one from M. le Duc de Fitz James.

"Have the kindness to present to the duke my thanks for his friendly invitation, and my regrets that I cannot accept it. I have plunged back into work necessitated by pitiless obligations. The bell has sounded in my cloister, and I must finish, for the 'Revue,' the painting of a feeling so great that it survives all shocks; it comes from a spring whence man, the ungrateful, is ever drawing, yet never draining its source."

His life-long and, possibly, truest friend was Madame Carraud, *née* Tourangin, the wife of Commandant Car-

raud, the head of the military school at Saint Cyr, and afterwards in charge of the government powder-works at Angoulême. She was the intimate friend of his sister, and about six years older than himself. He speaks of her, judging from a social point of view, as a brilliant mind and noble heart, running to waste in the narrow sphere of Angoulême. To her he went for rest and sympathy; she sustained his mind in its darkest moments, a service he never forgot, and fearlessly advised or rebuked him as her true affection and sound judgment dictated. After the events of July, 1830, she and her husband, with other influential friends, were anxious that he should be chosen deputy at the coming elections. He allowed his name to be put up both at Angoulême and at Cambrai, but was not elected at either place. Some of his letters to Madame Carraud are therefore on politics. The following was written, it must be remembered, when France was just beginning to try one of her many experiments on the body politic.

"November, 1830.

"The country is now in very serious circumstances. I am alarmed at the struggle before it. I see passions everywhere, and reason nowhere. If France is convulsed I shall not be among those who refuse to give her their arms or their talents, however much some friends may oppose it.[1] It is at such times that science and knowledge, the resources of which we have pushed so far, together with courage, ought to make France triumph. But even then what is to be the upshot of it

[1] He is speaking as a legitimist, and refers to friends who hold the same opinions.

all? Can we quell the uprising of injured interests which are now within the body politic? Ah, the number of patriots in whom there is no patriotism is great indeed. None are willing to unite patriotism with moderate principles, the constitutive plan of which I have already explained to you. We stand between the ultras of liberalism and of legitimacy, who will unite only in overthrowing all.

"Do not accuse me of want of patriotism, because my intelligence forces me to take the exact measure of men and things. The genius of government lies in bringing about a fusion of extremes. That is what Napoleon did, also Louis XVIII., — both men of talent; one never understood, the other understood by himself only. Each held all parties in hand, one by force the other by craft. To-day we have, for our sins, a government without a policy. This is a state of things to ruin us. Every day it deprives me of some hope. Therefore, you see, I am for the consolidation of interests. If you were in Paris, in the midst of men and circumstances, your *solitude politics* would soon change. You would not be here a minute without a shock. . . .

"I own to you frankly that I cannot conceive how any one can expect a representative government to exist without the differences of opinion which are the basis on which it rests. The tempest that is blowing to-day will always blow. You are supposing the natural action of the present government to be its misfortune. Now, without wishing to defend my ideas, let me tell you in a few words the system of government to which my whole life is ready to subscribe. It is the profession of a faith that is unalterable and quite possible of ac-

complishment; it is my political conscience, my scheme and my thought, to which I have as much right as others to whom I give the same liberty of opinion. My political life will be entirely devoted to the furtherance of such thoughts, and to their development. When I speak seriously on the future of my country there is no word or writing of mine that is not imbued with these principles.

"France ought to be a constitutional monarchy, with an hereditary royal family, and a chamber of peers endowed with extraordinary powers, representing landed property, etc.; with all possible guarantees for hereditary rights and for privileges, the nature of which should be discussed. Then there should be a second chamber, elective, and representing the interests of the intermediate masses which stand between the highest social positions and what we call the People. The body of the laws and the spirit of them should tend to enlighten *to the utmost* the People, that is, persons who own nothing, workmen, proletaries, etc., so as to advance them as soon as possible into the easy circumstances of the intermediate class. But, while so doing, the People should be kept under a powerful control, so that its individuals may be able to find light, help, and protection; and that no ideas, no combinations or intrigues should make it turbulent. The greatest liberty should be given to the upper class, for it has much to preserve and all to lose, and cannot therefore become licentious. The government should have all possible power. Thus, the government, the upper class, and the middle class have each an interest in making the lowest class happy and able to rise into the middle class, in which lies the

real power of all States. If rich men, the hereditary occupants of the upper chamber, growing corrupt in morals, give rise to abuses, we must remember that abuses are inseparable from the existence of society itself; they must be accepted with their concomitant benefits.

"That is my plan, my thought; it unites the good and philanthropic conditions of several systems. Persons may laugh at me and call me a liberal or an aristocrat; I shall not give up that system. I have meditated long and deeply on the institutions of society; this system appears to me — not the best, but — the least defective."

The period when Balzac in early manhood came upon the scene of political events was just before and after the Revolution, if it can be called such, of July, 1830. He considered himself connected with the old régime through his family, his father having been secretary of the Council under Louis XVI.; but besides this general bias, he had that of a strong personal belief in authority, and in the duty of maintaining it. He believed in two great vital powers for the control of mankind, and he thus expresses his belief in the Preface to the *Comédie Humaine*: —

"Christianity, and especially Catholicism, being (as I have said in the *Médecin de Campagne*) a complete system for the repression of the selfish interests of mankind, is the strongest element of the social order. If we study carefully a representation of Society moulded, as it were, upon the living form, with all its good and all its evil, we shall find that while thought — or rather

passion, which is thought and feeling combined — is the social element and bond, it is also an element of destruction. In this respect the social life is like the physical life: races and men attain longevity only by the non-exhaustion of the vital force. Consequently, instruction, or, to speak more correctly, religious education, is the great principle of the life of Society, the only means of diminishing the total of evil and augmenting the total of good in human life. Thought, the fountain of all good and of all evil, cannot be trained, mastered, and directed except by religion; and the only possible religion is Christianity, which created the modern world and will preserve it. From it sprang the need of the monarchical principle; in fact, Christianity and monarchy are twin principles. As to the limits in which both should be held and regulated lest they develop to their inherent conclusions, this brief preface is not the place for such discussion. Neither can I enter upon the religious and political dissensions of the present day. I write by the light of two eternal truths — religion and monarchy: two necessities proclaimed by contemporaneous events, and towards which every man of sound judgment will endeavor to bring back this nation."

Such were his principles; and he believed they would best promote the welfare of those for whom his sympathies were strongest, — the poor and the defenceless. No man has ever shown more feeling for those oppressed by fate or circumstances than Balzac; he wrote of their helpless sorrows with the red blood of his heart. No matter how sternly he exposed their vice and their shortcomings, we see that his sympathies are with them, — not

in a weak and commiserating way, but with comprehension of the causes which make them what they are, and the most earnest belief that his political creed would best lift up and rescue them. He may be right, but in his as in all creeds there is one element not duly allowed for, — human nature. Balzac had no leaning at all to the visionary beliefs and projects of the restless young minds of the day, heirs to ideas repressed by the strong hand of Napoleon and kept under by the Restoration. In 1830 they saw, or believed they saw, their opportunity. While despising the Orléans régime and laughing at the king and his personal submissions, they made themselves feared in the press in a short-lived way. With them and their ideas Balzac had no sympathy. He hated their theories and their socialisms, and, above all, what he called their "experiments on millions of ignorant and excitable natures." It is well, perhaps, that he was not able to carry out his desire to add the title of a great citizen to that of a great writer. In this best of all possible worlds politics require politicians, and he could never have reduced either his clear-sightedness or his tongue to its hypocrisies. "France," he said, "is being saved and lost perpetually. If she wants to be saved indeed let her go back to the laws of God. I tell you I know those laws; under one régime or under another you will have to come back to the law of laws, — unity of will."

The following letters are still to Madame Carraud: —

"June, 1832.

"As for politics, have faith that I shall conduct myself under the inspiration of a high and stern sense

of right; and, in spite of Monsieur Carraud's anathema on journalists, believe that I will never write or act except under conviction. My political life and ideas will not be understood in a moment. If I have ever a part in the government of the country I shall be judged later, and I am not afraid. I care more for the esteem of a few persons — among whom you hold the first rank as one of the finest minds and most elevated souls I have ever known — than for the estimation of the crowd, for which, to tell the truth, I have profound contempt. There are promptings, however, which we must obey; something irresistibly impels me to seek fame and power. It is not a happy life. Within me is the worship of woman, and a need of love which has never yet been completely satisfied. Despairing of ever being loved and understood by the woman of whom I dreamed, never having met her but under one form, in my heart, I desire to fling myself into the whirlpool of political passions as I have done into the lurid and parching atmosphere of literary ambition. I may fail in both, but, believe me, if I do seek to live in the life of the century, instead of passing through it obscure and happy, it is precisely because pure and unpretending happiness has failed me. Yes, you are right in all you say. If I met with a woman and a fortune I could resign myself very easily to domestic happiness; but where am I to find her? what parents will believe in a literary fortune? It would fill me with despair to owe my future to a woman I did not love. Believe that in the desert of my life such friendships as yours, and the certainty of finding an asylum in a loving heart are the sweetest consolations that

could be given to me. My strongest desire is for a country life, — but always with good neighbors and a happy home. In whatever land I could obtain this I would take it; I would do no more literature, except as an amateur, to please myself and not become inactive — if indeed one ever could be idle with trees to plant and to look at. To devote myself to the happiness of a woman has been my ceaseless dream; and I suffer because I have not realized it; but I cannot conceive of love and marriage in poverty."

"March, 1833.

"I live in an atmosphere of thoughts, ideas, conceptions, plans, and labors, which jostle and boil and sparkle in my head till I am half crazy. But nothing reduces my flesh; I am the best portrait of a monk ever seen since the earliest days of monasteries.

"As for my soul, it is profoundly sad. My work alone enables me to live. Is there no woman for me in this world? Must I drop from such crushing toil to nothing? Shall I never have beside me the tender and caressing spirit of woman, for whom I have done so much?"

"August, 1833.

"You are right, dear, noble soul, in loving Madame de Berny. In each of you are striking resemblances of thought, — the same love of the right; the same enlightened liberality, same love of progress, same desires for the good of the masses; same elevation of soul and of thought, the same delicacy in your natures. And for that I love you much.

"The *Médicin de Campagne* will reach you next week; it has cost me ten times the work that *Louis*

Lambert did. There is not a sentence, not an idea, which has not been viewed and reviewed, read and reread and corrected; the labor was frightful. I may now die in peace. I have done a great work for my country. To my mind it is better to have written this book than to have made laws or won battles. It is the Gospel in action."

"October, 1833.

"Do you know how the *Médecin* has been received? By a torrent of insults. The three newspapers of my own party which have spoken of it have done so with the utmost contempt for the work and its author; the others I don't know about. But I do not mind it much; you are my public, — you and a few choice souls whom I desire to please, but you above all, whom I am so proud to know; you whom I have never seen or listened to without gaining some good; you who have the courage to help me in pulling up the weeds in my garden; you who encourage me to perfect myself; you who resemble the angel to whom I owe all; you, so good to my *badnesses!* I alone know with what rapidity I turn to you and seek for your encouragement when some sharp arrow has wounded me; I am like the ringdove, seeking its nest. For you I feel an affection like none other; one which can have no rival and no counterpart. It is so good to be near you! From afar I can tell you all that I think of your soul and of your life without fear of being silenced. God knows there is no one who desires that your path here below be happy more than I do; would that I could send you the joys you need, just as my heart sends up its ardent prayers for your happiness. Yes,

think that in this volcanic Paris there is a being who thinks often of you and of all that is dear to you; who would gladly put away from your life whatever may trouble it; who appreciates you at your true value, — a being with a heart ever young and full of sincere friendship for you, a heart that shows its real self to none but you, and a few of those women who can understand sorrows."

"December, 1833.

"I have nothing to say against your criticisms on *Eugénie Grandet* except that facts are against you. There is a grocer at Tours who keeps a shop and has eight millions. M. Eynard, a pedler, has twenty; he was known to keep thirteen millions in gold in his house. He invested them in the public funds in 1814, and now has twenty millions. However, in the next edition, I will lower Grandet's fortune by six millions, and I will answer the rest of your criticisms at Frapesle. Meantime I thank you for them; but nothing can tell you how grateful I am for the maternal care which your remarks prove to me.

"Yes, count upon it, I am going to Frapesle, and I hope that I can persuade Madame de Berny to accompany me. On my return here yesterday I found her so ill that I was seized with a panic; my mind is full of anguish. Her life is so much to mine. Oh! no one can form a true idea of that deep affection which has sustained all my efforts, and comforts all my pains at every moment. You know something of it, you who understand friendship so well, you who are so kind and affectionate. As soon as I am relieved of anxiety I will write you again. My *Séraphita* is already far ad-

vanced. The fiasco of *Louis Lambert* and the *Médecin de Campagne* grieved me; but I have chosen my path; nothing shall discourage me."

"——, 1834.

"Germany has bought two thousand copies of the pirated *Louis Lambert;* France bought only two hundred of the real one! And yet, I am writing *Séraphita*, a work as much above *Louis Lambert* as *Louis Lambert* is above *Gaudissart*, — which I am told did not please you. We will talk about that. It is written that I shall never have complete happiness, freedom, liberty, except in perspective. But, dear, I can at least say this, with all the tender effusions of my heart, — that in the course of my long and painful way, four noble beings have held out their hands to me, have encouraged, loved, and pitied me; that yours is one of those hearts which have the unalterable privilege of priority over all my affections; in the silent hours when I look within me, the thought of you brings me rich memories. Yes, the egoism of poets and artists is a passion for art which holds their feelings in abeyance. But you have ever the right to claim me; all I have is yours."

"November, 1834.

"None of my friends realize how my work grows; I now need eighteen hours a day for it. Also, I am trying to evade the national guard duty, which would kill me; and so I have done as the painters do, invented pass-words, which are known only to such persons as seriously want to see me."

"December, 1835.

"Never has the torrent which bears me onward been so rapid; no more terribly majestic work has

ever compelled the human brain. I go to my toil as a gambler to cards. I sleep only five hours, and work eighteen; I shall end by killing myself — but the thought of you refreshes me sometimes. In another year I may reasonably hope to be out of debt; the happiness of owing nothing, which I thought impossible, is no longer a chimera. I shall pay my debts and buy La Grenadière. Another article in the 'Revue,' like the *Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées* (which appears in February, 1836), will bring me eight thousand francs. God grant that my fame be not mere reputation, and that reputation a fashion, and that fashion fleeting!"

"Les Jardies, near Sèvres (Seine-et-Oise), ——, 1838.

"This is my address for a very long time, thrice dear one, for my house is almost finished, and I am already living in it. Three rooms, one above the other: salon on the ground-floor, my bedroom above that, my study on the upper floor, — all three communicating by means of a ladder to which is given the name of staircase. Such is the abode of your friend. Around it is a walk which winds over an acre of ground inclosed by walls, where trees and flowers and shrubs cannot be planted till next November. Then, about sixty feet away, is a detached building containing stable, coach-house, kitchen, etc., one large room, and others for the servants. Such is Les Jardies. This parrot's perch on which I roost, with its tiny garden, and the servants' quarters, is situated near the middle of the valley of Ville-d'Avray, but in the township of Sèvres behind the park of Saint-Cloud. It stands on the hillside, and faces south, with the loveliest view in the world; it has

a pump which is some day to be hidden by clematis and other climbing-plants, a pretty brook, a future world of *our* flowers, silence, and — forty-five thousand francs to pay for it! You understand. Yes, the folly is done, completed! Don't talk to me about it. I have got to pay for it, and so I am beginning to sit up all night.

I have been to Sardinia, and I am not dead. I found the twelve hundred thousand francs I divined were there, but a Genoese had got hold of them by a *biglietto reale* only three days before my arrival. I had a sort of vertigo, and that ended it. You shall hear all about my journey when we meet. It is curious enough, I can tell you."

"Les Jardies, March, 1839.

"Dear, what you ask is absolutely impossible; two or three months from now nothing would be more easy. To you, sister of my soul, I can confide my last secret; I am in the depths of misery. All the walls of Les Jardies are crumbling down, through the builder's fault; he has not put any foundations; and this disaster, though he alone is to blame, falls on me to repair, for he does not own a sou, and I had only paid him eight thousand francs on account. Do not call me imprudent, *cara*, I ought to have been rich by this time; I have done miracles of work, but all my intellectual walls have toppled over now, together with the stone ones. I have come down like a foundered horse, — I need to go to Frapesle to rest myself."

In these letters we find Balzac's first mention of Madame de Berny, whom he regarded as the guardian angel of his life. He must have destroyed all letters

and papers addressed to her, so that the sacredness of their intercourse might not be exposed to curious eyes. Like Madame Carraud, she was the friend of his family, and some years older than himself. Her husband was Monsieur Alexandre de Berny (to whom *Madame Firmiani* is dedicated). They lived on a small estate at Saint-Firmin in the Seine-et-Oise, spending part of the year in Paris or its neighborhood. During the time the de Balzac family were at Villeparisis, the de Bernys had a house there, and this was the beginning of their intercourse. As no written record of Balzac's friendship with Madame de Berny exists which connects it in any definite way with the outward events of his life, it is best to leave all further mention of that affection until the end, when we may be more able to judge of its influence on his life.

CHAPTER VI.

LITERARY LIFE.

During the thirteen years from 1830 to 1842, Balzac being then thirty-one to forty-three years of age, his great work was done. There are signs in 1843 that his health was beginning to fail; he could not force himself to work as he once did; periods of stagnation began to set in, although at times he recovered his full vigor, and three of his greatest works were written during the last eight years of his life, — namely, *Les Paysans*, and *Les Parents Pauvres: Le Cousin Pons*, and *La Cousine Bette*.

His external literary life was not a happy one. He had many publishers, and did not continue on good terms with any of them. It is obvious to those who look back upon the history of these troubles that they were, in the first instance, the natural and unavoidable outcome of Balzac's method of work, and the clash of interests that resulted from it. There cannot be a doubt that Balzac was a thorn in the flesh of his publishers. We have only to read Théophile Gautier's account of his manner of correcting proof — or rather of hammering out his ideas on the anvil of ten proofs, the sparks of his corrections flying wildly about them — to feel that the flesh and blood of printers and publishers could hardly bear the trial. Werdet (who bought up

the interests of other publishers in 1834, and was his sole publisher till 1837) says that the difficulty with proofs "was at the bottom of his troubles with publishers and editors, who were forced to pay the enormous costs of correction." This statement is not strictly true, for Balzac mentions more than once in his letters that he has had to pay over a thousand francs for proof-corrections; and he specially mentions the liberality of Madame Bechet (Werdet being at the time her business manager), who assumed four thousand francs for corrections which were justly chargeable to him. But, in any case, the trial of printing for him must have been great, and he tells himself how, entering a printing-office unexpectedly, he overheard a compositor exclaiming: "I've done my hour of Monsieur de Balzac; who takes him next?"

Another cause of annoyance to his publishers was Balzac's delay in supplying manuscript. He would not let anything go from him until he felt it was the best he could do; the conscience of his work was before all else, and his mind refused to be forced to finish a book to order. "I am ready," he says, replying to Alphonse Levavasseur, who had been more than usually urgent, "to send you the copy on the 15th; but it will be the most infamous murder of a book that was ever committed. There is in me a feeling, I don't know what it is, which prevents me from consciously doing wrong. The question here is the future of a book, — am I to make it unworthy trash, or a work for the shelves of a library? The copy is lying there on my desk, but I am stopped short by a sketch to complete, an idea to develop, by — but it would take me till

morning to explain how that work hangs between success and a gibbet at every page. You must not think this letter an excuse. I do work as hard, and in as concentrated a way, as any human creature could do; but I am the very humble servant of inspiration, and the vixen has her moments of ill-humor."

He was in the habit of carrying on several works at a time, apparently resting his mind by turning from one to another, and taking each up as he felt himself inspired with its subject. Some of these books being in course of current publication in reviews and weekly papers, such delays were, of course, a fruitful source of quarrel and complaint.

If we are to believe Werdet,[1] Balzac sold the right to publish his books under certain invariable conditions, namely: those issued periodically in reviews were controlled by the editors during publication and for three months after the date of the concluding number; those issued in book form belonged to the publishers for one year only. There is evidence that his rights over his books were strong and lasting. He held a different position towards publishers from that of writers in the

[1] Nine years after Balzac's death Werdet published a book about him: Portrait intime de Balzac; sa vie, son humeur, et son caractère; par Edmond Werdet, 1 vol., Silvestre, Paris, 1859. It is worth reading by those who understand Balzac, for its comical malignity. If the particular charge which Werdet brings against him be carefully read, the dates collated, the whole brought within compass, and stripped of Werdet's malicious diffuseness, it will be found that Balzac behaved justly and with forbearance, and that Werdet's real grievance was that in a moment of temper he killed the goose that gave him golden eggs, and was taken at his word.

present day, who seem to be the hirelings of capitalists. According to French law, after a book was in type it could not be printed without a written order (*bon à tirer*) from the author; neither could it be published without the same. The publisher was in fact the author's business agent; making his profits, but not controlling the property. The accounts were open to both parties, and when the time for settlement came author and publisher went over the books together and settled the business (see Werdet). This appears to have been the usual method of publication, thus placing the author in an honorable position towards his work and towards the public; and French law, which has thrown many safeguards around an author, protected him in it. Balzac was a strong stickler for his rights, and when he thought them infringed he appealed to the law, which he had at his fingers' ends.

Nowhere among the multiplicity of statements on the money affairs of his books do we find a clear account of the money he derived from them; in fact, his methods of publication were so involved that it would be impossible to discover the profits of each book. Werdet carefully keeps back, in his wordy narrative, the sums he paid to Balzac, and his own profits, but he mentions that the second edition of the *Médecin de Campagne* was sold in eight days, *Le Père Goriot* in six, and *Séraphita* before the book was published, with two hundred and fifty copies promised; and he says, in a rather casual way at the close of his book, "I estimate at 450,000 francs, at least, the sum which Balzac derived from the profits of his books up to the time of our rupture (1838). I could give the details,

but that might seem useless. To this already large sum must be added the product of his other works, published from 1838 to the time of his death." Léon Gozlan differs wholly from this estimate, and says that during the first half of Balzac's literary life his work was not lucrative, and that if we exclude the returns of two or three fortunate books, the average of his literary profits during his whole life did not exceed ten or twelve thousand francs a year. This is undoubtedly a blunder which can be disproved by Balzac's correspondence. The real truth probably lies between the statements of the two men, who both wrote from a *parti pris*.[1]

The events of July, 1830, were injurious to publishing interests, owing partly to the stringency of money and the stoppage of all credit for three years. Authors and publishers suffered much from it, and also from the pirated editions which now began to appear in Belgium. Balzac mentions in a letter that two thousand copies of one of his books had been sold in Brussels against two hundred in Paris. The same wrong was also committed in the provinces of France, where, on one occasion, ten thousand copies of M. de Lamennais's

[1] Balzac intime ; en pantoufles et chez lui, par Léon Gozlan, 1 vol., Librairie Illustrée, Paris, no date, — the work of a man who saw only one limited side of Balzac, and exaggerated that for the purpose of writing a smart book. Monsieur Marcel Barrière tells us, in his able commentary on Balzac, that foreigners at first appreciated Balzac better than the French, who need, before all things, *esprit*, in which, he says, Balzac was lacking. For this reason, perhaps, Frenchmen may read Monsieur Léon Gozlan's book with more interest than a foreigner, to whom it seems a torrent of rather vulgar and very self-conscious writing, in which Balzac himself is lost.

"Paroles d'un Croyant" were printed and sold without the writer's knowledge. This wrong led Balzac to seek admission to the Société des Gens-de-lettres, then a comparatively weak body, which somewhat resented, it appears, his hitherto slight appreciation of it and now feared to be involved in his struggles with publishers. This feeling lasted but a short time, and later in the same year he became its president. His inspiring presence instantly gave impetus to the Society, owing to his accurate knowledge of the business of publication, his rare ability in maintaining an author's rights, and, more especially, his profound conviction of the dignity of a man of letters.[1] In the autumn of 1841 Balzac resigned from the Society, owing to disagreements on a committee he had himself inspired. This committee was charged to prepare a manifesto which should cover the whole ground of the condition of French literature, its right to be considered a power in the State, the service it had rendered to the nation and to history throughout all time, the slight protection, or even decent good-will, which the present government afforded it, and the danger and the shame to France of allowing such a state of things. The Société des Gens-de-lettres proposed to present this manifesto to the two Chambers, and to scatter it broadcast through the country, in order to obtain support. But the committee

[1] Those who are interested in the protection of literature should read Balzac's articles which were written in the service of the Society, viz.: *Code Littéraire; Notes sur la propriété littéraire;* and *Lettre aux Écrivains Français du XIX siècle.* They will be found in the Œuvres complètes de H. de Balzac. Édition définitive. Calmann Lévy, Paris.

were unable to agree on the terms of the document, and Balzac, with one other member, resigned from the Society, doubts having been thrown on their impartiality.

Literature under Louis-Philippe received but slight encouragement. The king, common by nature, sought only to ingratiate himself with the bourgeoisie, and knew and cared little about writers, except as they supported him or made him fear them in the press. Material interests, solid wealth, limited to the interests of its acquisition, ruled the day; the minds that ruled the world, and gave it posterity were, as now, in the position of underlings. "These stupid kings," cried Balzac to Victor Hugo, "ignore the fact that without us the world would know nothing about them. The very monuments they put up to their own memory crumble away; the pictures they hang in their museums to show the world what they do that is useful and grand don't last; not one is over five centuries old. Without Virgil and Horace and Titus Livius and Ovid, who could distinguish Augustus from all the other Augustuses, though he was the nephew of Cæsar? If it were not for that little lawyer without a brief, Suetonius, we should n't know three Cæsars out of the dozen he wrote about; without Tacitus we should confound the Romans of his time with the northern barbarians; without Shakspeare all the life of the reign of Elizabeth would disappear; without Racine, Corneille, Pascal, La Bruyère, Saint-Simon, Molière, Louis XIV., reduced to his wigs and his mistresses, would be no better than a crowned head on a sign-post; and without *us* Louis-Philippe's name would n't be better known to posterity than

that of Philippe who keeps the restaurant in the rue Montorgueil."

An amusing account is given by Champfleury of Balzac's last meeting with men of letters. It took place after the Revolution of 1848, when Balzac chanced to be in Paris for a few weeks on his return from Russia. It does not come within the chronology of this chapter, but as it is allied to the subject of governmental recognition of literature an abridgment of Champfleury's narrative may be given here.[1]

In May, 1848, M. Ledru-Rollin, being then minister of the Interior of the new republic, put an official notice in the newspapers inviting literary men, *gens-de-lettres*, to assemble on a certain day in a hall of the Institute. About two o'clock of that day a mixed and very singular company, none of whom seemed to know each other, assembled. "Monsieur de Balzac suddenly entered, and all present turned to look at the stout man, who on that occasion wore gloves and a green coat. He glanced rapidly round the hall, and seeing me came and took a seat at my side. A man mounted the platform and announced that he came from M. Ledru-Rollin, minister of the Interior, to inquire what the government could do in behalf of books of art (*livres d'art*). The term "books of art" roused the whole assembly, who began to shout in a manner to which the halls of the Institute were little accustomed. M. Francis Wey made a clever and truthful speech, in which he showed that books of art were an open sore

[1] Grandes Figures, d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, par Champfleury, 1 vol., Poulet-Malasses, Paris, 1861. This essay should be read by all students of Balzac.

in literature; that books of art ate up the profits which ought to go to the writers; that books of art, in short, were useless things, and altogether injurious to the interests of men of letters. Whereupon the assembly gave three groans for books of art, and the private secretary of M. Ledru-Rollin hastily disappeared, leaving the authors to discuss the matter alone. Now it is noticeable that the most turbulent of all meetings, where the persons present least understand each other, and give the worst explanations of their meaning, are those of literary men. The wise chairman is he who manages to prevent a discussion. Monsieur de Balzac laughed immensely at the uproar; he was pleased as a child with the noise, and his stomach shook in his pleated trousers. 'What singular literary men!' he said to me. 'I don't know one of them; where do they come from? do tell me who they are.' I told him the names of all I knew. When the tumult had subsided a little, the assembly voted to send two delegates to make M. Ledru-Rollin understand that books of art were useless things, and that he would do much better to encourage literature in other ways. M. de Balzac was chosen as one of the delegates; on this he mounted the platform and said, after thanking the assembly, that he could not accept the honor conferred upon him. He pointed out that the minister had asked a question of literary men, and that it would not do to reply to a question with a piece of advice. 'Either make no answer,' he said, 'or answer about books of art.' The assembly, however, sent their advice to the ministry by other delegates; and so ended the sole effort of the republic of liberty, equality, and fraternity to benefit literature."

Champfleury adds, by the way, that Balzac was one of the first to enter the Tuileries on the 24th of February, 1848, after the flight of Louis-Philippe. He told a friend who met him that he had come to get a piece of the velvet of the throne.[1]

Another cause of trouble between Balzac and his editors and publishers arose from the pernicious system of payment that prevailed, — caused, it may be, by the stringency of money after the revolution of July, but none the less dangerous to the interests of both parties. Payments were almost invariably made in bills payable at distant dates. If a writer needed money, which was usually the case, he was subjected to both trouble and loss in getting these notes discounted. In Balzac's case (probably in that of other writers) such transactions were frequent, and the notes sometimes matured and came back upon the publishers, before the manuscript was delivered to them. This was naturally a cause of complaint, and the state of things was complicated by his other money difficulties. Much has been written of those difficulties. Other parts of his life being in obscurity, the story of his debts and his struggle to pay them has unfortunately acquired undue proportions. His own imagination, goaded by a sense of honor which all accounts (of enemies as well as friends) attribute to

[1] It may not be impertinent to add here, in a note, that the English nurse of the present writer was carried into the Tuileries directly after the king's flight by a surging mob of rioters. She was brave as a lion; and one of the combatants, seeing her interest, slashed off a piece of the throne with his sabre and gave it to her. This piece, which is of crimson velvet heavily worked in gold, is in the possession of the writer. The throne was burned that night in the Place du Château d'Eau.

him, magnified them. The undiscriminating publication of his letters to his mother, directing her in the management of his affairs, and sometimes defending himself, not without irritation, against what appear to have been her nagging complaints, has done his memory an injury by presenting him in a grasping and money-getting light. The facts, now seen from a distance, are easily understood. He began life under the inspiration of an unbounded ambition, quickly handicapped by debt, with nothing to pay that debt or to live by except his pen, and gifted with a high sense of honor. Could he have continued to live a garret-life of solitude, he might have paid his debts within a certain time and gained his freedom. But was it possible for him to have lived in that way? No. Given the man, his genius, his ambition, the bent of his mind, which was to the study of life, his tastes for the beautiful, the intoxication of his first successes, which brought him into personal relations with wealth and luxury, and, above all, his imagination, it was not possible for the historian of human society to live remote from its life; he was of necessity a sharer in it. Debt, as we know, thrives upon itself. To meet his obligations and get the means of living in the world, he promised books to publishers and received advanced payments, on the system already mentioned; and the books were often not forthcoming at the promised time. These habits and practices made all publishers inimical to him; though it does not anywhere appear, after careful study, that his engagements were not fulfilled in the end, nor that any publisher or editor suffered by him. On the contrary, there is more than one instance of his

buying back his copy from the editors of reviews who were not satisfied, paying for the costs of the parts already published. He took back *Séraphita* in this way, after three numbers had been published in the "Revue de Paris."

The general dissatisfaction between himself and his publishers broke out, finally, in his memorable dispute with Buloz, then editor of the "Revue de Paris," and also of the "Revue des Deux Mondes." His sister gives an account of it in her narrative, but it is well to add Werdet's statement of the actual facts; coming from Werdet, who was in position to know them, and who would not have spared Balzac had they told against him, they are probably correct.

M. Buloz having, in 1835, bought *Le Lys dans la Vallée* for the "Revue de Paris," on Balzac's usual terms, sold the right of publication to a French review at Saint Petersburg, and the book was issued there before it was half issued in Paris. Moreover, it was printed, not from Balzac's final proofs, on which he had given the order to print, but from the first corrected proof; letters were printed as part of the text, the beginning and end of sentences were omitted, the corrections and additions were added, not substituted, so that twenty pages of the Paris edition were swelled to forty pages of the Russian. The injustice was great to Balzac, who, finding himself unable to get redress, declared openly that "M. Buloz had done injury to his, Balzac's, reputation, and to the cause of French literature." Buloz replied that he had acted within his legal rights, which allowed him to publish the book as he saw fit up to a period of three months from the last publication in

the "Revue de Paris." Balzac then proposed to compromise the matter by recovering his rights in the book when the publication in the "Revue de Paris" ceased. Buloz refused. Some of the associates in the "Revue" sustained Buloz, others Balzac. The acrimony was great; it led to a series of cabals and hatreds against Balzac, who was comparatively defenceless under them. Out of the whole newspaper press only one sheet, the "Quotidienne," supported him, but that did so heartily. Balzac then brought an action against the "Revue de Paris," and was sustained in the courts. Buloz was condemned to give up the book at once, and pay the costs of the suit. Balzac immediately rewrote the first chapter, which had already been published in the "Revue;" Werdet put the whole book in type, and three days after the decision was rendered eighteen hundred copies out of an edition of two thousand was sold in two hours.

At this period Werdet, as Balzac's publisher, was admitted to the solitude in which his working days and nights were spent, and he gives a little picture of it which is worth preserving. "He usually," writes Werdet, "went to bed at eight o'clock after a very light dinner, and almost invariably was seated before his little writing-table by two in the morning. Until six his lively, active pen (he always used crow-quills) ran at full speed over the paper, emitting electric sparks. The grating of that pen alone interrupted the monastic silence of his solitude. At six he took his bath, remaining in it a whole hour. At eight o'clock Auguste brought him a cup of coffee, which he drank without sugar. From eight to nine I was admitted to bring

him proofs, or take away the corrected ones, and to wrest from him, if possible, a few bundles of manuscript. The labor of composition then began again, and lasted, with the same ardor, till noon, when he breakfasted on two boiled eggs and bread, drinking nothing but water, and ending this frugal meal with a cup of excellent coffee, still without sugar. From one to six at work again, always work. Then he dined very lightly, drinking one small glass of Vouvray, which he liked much, declaring it had the power to raise his spirits. From seven to eight he received me again, and sometimes his neighbors, Jules Sandeau and Émile Regnault. This life lasted six weeks, or two months, or more. His seclusion over, he seemed possessed of a feverish activity, and to make himself another man, as it were. He plunged into society, where he gathered fresh colors on his palette, and pillaged his honey like a bee. . . .

"His servants loved him. Rose, the cook, a true cordon bleu (we called her La Grande Nanon), used to go into despair when her master, in his working months, neglected her dainty dishes. I have seen her come into his room on tiptoe, bringing a delicious consommé and trembling with eagerness to see him drink it. Balzac would catch sight of her, perhaps the fumes of the soup would reach his olfactories; then he would toss back his mane of hair with an impatient jerk of his head, and exclaim in his roughest and most surly voice: 'Rose, go away; I don't want anything; let me alone!' 'But Mossieu will ruin his health if he goes on this way; Mossieu will fall — ill!' 'No, no! let me alone, I say,' in a thundering

voice, 'I don't want anything; you worry me; go away!' Then the good soul would turn to go slowly, very slowly, muttering: 'To take such pains to please Mossieu! and such a soup — how good it smells! Why should Mossieu keep me in his service if he does n't want what I do for him?' This was too much for Balzac. He called her back, drank the soup at a gulp, and said in his kindest voice, as she went off radiant to her kitchen, 'Now, Rose, don't let this happen again.' When his microscopic groom, a poor little orphan whom he called Grain-de-mil, died, Balzac took extreme care of him, and never failed to go and see him daily during his illness. Yes, God had given my great writer a heart of gold; and those who really knew him adored him. He possessed the art of making others love him to such a degree that in his presence they forgot any real or fancied complaint against him, and only remembered the affection they bore him."

Although Balzac parted company with journalism in 1831, and was from that time aloof on his own road in literature, he never ceased to desire the growth of sound criticism, which he declared did not exist in France. "I believe," he said, "that if ever patient, thorough, enlightened criticism was needed it is now, when the multiplicity of works of all kinds, and the uprising of ambitions are producing general confusion and the same want of order in literature which is observable in the art of painting. In that art matters have reached such a pass that there are neither masters nor schools; the absence of discipline is injuring the sacred cause of art, and is becoming a hindrance to its faculties — to a sense

of the beautiful even, on which production rests. Where is the critic in the present day who understands the resources of criticism, and employs them with the laudable purpose of explaining and bringing into use true methods of literary art, having read and studied the works he criticises? To read a work and understand it for one's self before rendering an account of it to the public; to search for its defects in the interests of literature, and not for the sad amusement of grieving an author, is a task which takes time, — weeks, not days."

With ideas like these in his mind he bought up, in 1835, a weekly journal, then moribund, called the "Chronique de Paris." He summoned to his staff the best young talent of the day, and issued the paper semi-weekly, on Sundays and Thursdays. As editor-in-chief he took charge of the department of foreign politics, and distributed the other offices as follows: Jules Sandeau, drama; Émile Regnault, light literature; Gustave Planche and Jacques de Chaudes-Aigues, social criticism; Alphonse Karr, satire; Théophile Gautier, Charles de Bernard, and Raymond Brucker, novels and poems. Balzac's own contribution to the work was a series of papers on the current state of Europe, entitled *La France et l'Étranger*. These forty-one articles are extremely interesting as showing the study that he gave to subjects which were, one might think, outside of his line of thought. Those who can remember the discussion of foreign politics in those days, especially that on the "Eastern question," will be interested in them. They relate chiefly to the general condition of Europe; but Americans will observe that several intelligent references to the United

States occur in the course of them. However, whether it was that Balzac aimed too high to amuse the public, or that, as Werdet suggests, he could not make his young staff work, the "Chronique de Paris" proved a failure, and lived but a few months. Five years later he again renewed the attempt; but this time he did the work alone. In 1840 he began the "Revue Parisienne," a monthly periodical written wholly by himself; which lived three months, and died for want of subscribers. Some of the articles in these numbers have been greatly praised by French critics, especially those on Fenimore Cooper and on Stendhal; but for the most part they belonged to their day, and have passed away with it. Among them is the well-known criticism on Sainte-Beuve's "Histoire de Port Royal," which, however just it may be from a literary and historical point of view, does not fulfil Balzac's own desire to avoid the "sad amusement of grieving an author." It is true that Sainte-Beuve had assailed Balzac six years earlier, when reviewing *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, by touching on personal matters which had nothing to do with literature, and were peculiarly wounding to him, — namely, his relation through his books to women, combined with an imaginary sketch of his early life. The two men were antagonistic by nature; and it is to the honor of Sainte-Beuve's cold and rather sour spirit that he did, after Balzac's death, impelled by his true literary sense, write a review of him which was fully as just and perceptive as his nature could allow him to make it; and it must not be forgotten that with all his limitations he saw and said what is, in fact, the deepest truth about Balzac, —

namely, that posterity alone could judge him.[1] Champfleury says somewhat the same thing in his modest but valuable essay. "There are two ways of criticising M. de Balzac," he says. "The simplest is to read his works, to understand them, and then sit down and write an article on the *Comédie Humaine*. The second method, wellnigh impossible for our present literature, is to shut one's self up for six months, and carefully study in their every detail, as we study a difficult language, not only the *Comédie Humaine*, but all M. de Balzac's works. This cannot be done quickly. Perhaps in twenty years, fifty years, after ten patient students have gathered together the chief materials, some man of great intellect will profit by their labor, and will combine them all in one great commentary."

It was Balzac's ambition, as it has ever been that of great minds representing human nature, to do dramatic work. He regarded the stage as a great, if not the greatest teacher of men; the most powerful and wide-reaching of moral influences. He placed it far above the work of the novelist. It was natural therefore that his ambition should constantly keep before his mind the hope of becoming a dramatic author. We have already seen how practice and the throwing-off of immature and comparatively worthless books were needed before he gathered together his powers as a novelist. It is possible that if his life had been prolonged he might, in the perfect peace of a prosperous married life, have given himself wholly to dramatic art, and with his unflinching conscientiousness have trained his powers into

[1] Portraits contemporains, par C. A. Sainte-Beuve, vol. ii. Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1889.

doing work that would have lived forever. As it is, the five dramas produced upon the stage (there are more than a score of others, finished and unfinished, still in manuscript) are far from equal to his other work. They are worth studying, however, for it will be seen that their chief defects come from his habits as a novelist, which time and practice might have corrected. For instance, the stage requires a clear and easily distinguished plot; in Balzac's novels the plot is often, it might be said, absent. He depicts life, and life has no such artificial arrangement; but for the stage it is necessary to bring the portion of life depicted sharply into focus, and this Balzac had not trained himself to do. Also, the management of his scenes is clumsy, the dialogue heavy, with the philosophical and didactical tendency which those who truly care for his books agree to welcome there. Yet, in spite of these defects of form for stage composition, he had, in an eminent degree, the dramatic instinct.

The last play that he wrote, *Le Faiseur* (The Speculator), ought to be rewritten for the stage of the present day, for it is marvellous as a prophecy of the pass to which money would bring the world; it is, in fact, a truer picture of our times than of the times in which it was written. George Henry Lewes made an inadequate version of it which was played for a time in London.

In addition to his higher dramatic ambitions he had that of earning a better wage for his labor; this he shares in common with all novelists, who in these days, as in his, find that purely literary work is not remunerated for the toil it costs, and that the stage alone repays their labor. At the time when he produced his

first play, *Vautrin*, he was under an unusual pressure of ill-luck. The walls of Les Jardies had crumbled down, his brother Henry was in trouble, which threw certain obligations upon him, and a first dramatic venture, which he does not name, but which had cost him much labor, and was sold for a premium of six thousand francs, exclusive of royalties, had been returned to him, owing to lack of money on the part of the theatre to bring it out. No critical judgment was ever rendered upon *Vautrin*, which was acted for the first and only time at the Porte-Saint-Martin in 1840, because Frédérick Lemaitre, who played Vautrin in the dress of a Mexican general, happened to wear a toupee, which was thought to mimic and deride Louis Philippe, who was noted for that pyramidal covering to his baldness, which gave a sort of stalk to his pear-shaped head. The play was forbidden by the government the next day, with an offer of indemnity to Balzac, which he refused, asking, however, for compensation to the theatre and the actors. "I refused," he says in a letter to Madame Visconti. "I said that I had either a right to it or no right to it. If I had a right, my obligations to others must be considered. I said I asked nothing; that I valued such virginity of spirit; that my wishes were, nothing for myself, or all for the others."

His second play, *Les Ressources de Quinola*, was performed at the Odéon, March 15th, 1842, and failed. Balzac, who had set high hopes upon this piece and continued to think it worthy of a better fate, mentions in his preface to the printed version that only four persons had defended it, namely: Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Madame de Girardin, and Léon Gozlan. The blow

was a crushing one, and it wrung from him a grieved and disheartened cry in a letter to his mother, dated April, 1842 : —

"The life I live," he writes, "is not fit to share with others. I tire out both friends and relatives ; they one and all avoid my sad home, and things will now be more difficult, if not impossible, than ever ; the loss of money from my play only complicates the situation. . . . I don't know what to do ; but I must decide on some course within the next few days. When my furniture is sold, and Les Jardies too, there will not be much left ; I shall be once more alone with my pen and a garret. I shall live from hand to mouth on articles I can no longer write as I once did with the celerity of youth. You think — my nearest all think — that the egotism of my toil is personal selfishness. I do not deceive myself : if up to this time, working as I have worked, I have not succeeded in getting clear of debt and making a living, future work will not save me. I must do something else. I must seek some other position."

It was at this time that he wrote *Albert Savarus*, one of the most remarkable of his books, and little read, — the story of a man's love through passionate effort and a great defeat.[1]

[1] It has been said that *Albert Savarus* was inspired by his relations with Madame Hanska. But this cannot be so. It is unmistakably the picture of man's first love for woman in his youth. At the time *Albert Savarus* was written (a year before Monsieur Hanski's death) Balzac's relation to Madame Hanska was that of friendship only. It had, no doubt, the germs of love, but they were not developed until later. At this time it certainly was not in his thoughts as the inspiration of *Albert Savarus*. His love for Madame Hanska was that of his mature life, not of his youth ;

Of his succeeding plays, *Paméla Giraud* was brought out at the Gaieté in September, 1843, when Balzac was paying his first visit to Madame Hanska at St. Petersburg, after the death of her husband. He seems to have taken little interest in it. *La Marâtre* was produced at the Théâtre Historique, June, 1848. *Le Faiseur* was not played at all during his lifetime, but after his death it was reduced to three acts and brought out successfully, August, 1851, at the Gymnase, under the title of *Mercadet*, and at the Théâtre Français, October, 1868, with M. Got in the leading part.

Théophile Gautier dwells at length on what he calls the absolute modernity of Balzac's genius. "Balzac owes nothing," he says, "to antiquity. For him there are neither Greeks nor Romans, nor any trace in the composition of his talent of Homer, or Virgil, or Horace, not even of the *Viris illustribus;* no one was ever less classic." It is quite true, obviously true, that Balzac's genius was brought to bear solely on the present. Its work lay there, — a work so teeming that there was (to give the simplest of reasons) no room for extraneous thoughts and images. If at times it rose above the plane of its immediate work it was to other regions than those of classic antiquity. But none the less is Balzac's genius allied to antiquity so far as that is the representative of the eternal verities. Look, for instance,

although it was a repetition of that early love. The book was written under the bitter sense that his life was once more a failure, his vocation insufficient for his needs, and that his literary ambition, which had hitherto been the mainstay of his life, had lost its vitality. At such a moment of fresh disappointment and despair his mind reverted to the sorrows of his youth.

at the awfulness of Fate as it stalks through his pages, relentlessly pursuing men like Philippe Bridau and Baron Hulot to their doom; the spirit of Greek tragedy is there. Or, turn to his picturing of Sorrow. He himself points to the source from which he learned it as he walked in Père-Lachaise in search of sorrows. "Of all the affections of the soul," he says, "sorrow is the hardest to depict; in that we moderns are the very humble servants of the ancients." If we turn to the patient mother's sorrow in Agathe Bridau, the repentant mother's sorrow in Lady Brandon, the noble grief of César Birotteau, the anguish of Colonel Chabert, the blighted life of Albert Savarus, or Dante's despairing vision on the Seine, we see an instinct in Balzac's genius which was certainly not modern, for such sorrows, though they belong to all time, are not characteristic of our day as they were of antiquity.

Gautier goes farther, and says that this modernity affected Balzac's sense of art. "He read with careless eyes the marble strophes in which Greek art has sung the glory of the human form. He could look at the Venus of Milo without ecstasy; but if a Parisian woman draped in her shawl, with all her many graces, stopped before that immortal statue, his eyes lighted up with pleasure. Ideal beauty, with its serene, pure lines, was too simple, too cold, too uniform, for his complicated, teeming, and diversified genius." This is surely too narrow a conclusion. It is true that Balzac had no sympathy with romantic ideals, whether ancient or modern; and it may also be said that his deepest appreciation of art was as the work of men's hands, — here its appeal to his mind was probably through the

fellow-feeling of his own struggle in manipulating his art. "The artist," he says, "is a creator; the man who disposes of thought is a sovereign. Kings have commanded nations for a limited time; artists command the ages; shall we forget that art from the dawn of fresco and of sculpture is a Power to the present day?" But many proofs could be adduced from his writings of his reverence for the ability of art to render "serene, pure" truth. "Who but Raffaelle," he exclaims, "can paint a virgin? for literature in this respect falls below art."

His sense of certain arts, as art, may have been defective; his judgment, perhaps his enjoyment, of poetry certainly was; the trammels of that art affected him. But he was himself a poet, and a great poet. There is no evidence, either way, as to his knowledge of the classics (except that as a lad of sixteen he studied them ardently), but the man who described the heroic deeds of his own time in heroic words, as in his pictures of Napoleon, must have loved Homer; and he who saw the vision of the SHADE, "standing upon the outer verge of that dark circle of the abyss of woe, his feet straining, with cruel tension, to spring upward" to the Woman-Soul from which he was forever parted, knew Dante as few in our day know him. And what shall we say of the Assumption in *Séraphita?* In a future age, when the subject is better understood, that will be counted as the work of one of the greatest poets of the nineteenth century; at present it is neither ancient nor modern art, but a vision of futurity.

There is, however, much to corroborate Gautier's opinion (which is just, so far as it goes, but misses the higher ground which Balzac reached) in the fact that

the art in which he found most personal enjoyment, namely, music, is a modern art; also in the further fact that his collection of rare things, so lovingly catalogued in *Cousin Pons*, comprised chiefly the treasures of man's choicest handiwork, especially such as had historic interest attaching to them; but above all, in the signal instance that one form of his own work, his style, is essentially modern.

It is not possible for foreigners to judge of the style of a French writer from the French point of view, nor should they attempt to do so. The necessary understanding is bred in the bone, and no acquired comprehension can take its place. There are, of course, some points which a foreigner can perceive, and several on which the close intercourse that comes of translation justifies an opinion; but it must always be borne in mind that the opinion is English, not French, and due allowance must be made for this. Balzac's style is the voice of his genius; what his genius was, that his style is, — like master, like man. When he wrestled in solitude to form his thought, he took the words that best formulated it. Language was not to him an art in itself, it was the sluice of his ideas. As the torrent of his thought, such as we see it in his books, came rushing on, with its hundred currents and aspects, philosophical, metaphorical, descriptive, it seized words, or made them, or modelled phrases, as its expression needed. This was certainly not classical, and many of the French writers who in Balzac's day were still under the traditions of the seventeenth century were shocked; though he was not as much of a neologist as they said he was, for the studies he had made of the French

language from the time of Rabelais for the *Contes Drolatiques* enabled him to replace many words which the purists of the seventeenth century had discarded. But however impetuous the torrent of Balzac's writing, the current is always clear; it is not limpid, like the soft flowing of George Sand's language, but in whatever channel, or stream, or brook it runs, the words that best express the thing to be expressed are there. There are times, in fact, when Balzac's style is matchless in its presentation of the *feeling* of the scene he is describing. Take, for instance, the rendering of the "majesty of Cold," the flight of the eider duck, the breaking of the ice-bonds, in *Séraphita*. It may almost be said that words of description could no farther go in conveying not only a scene, but the sensation of it. Could poetry as an art do more?

It has been said that Balzac is a difficult writer to translate. He does not seem so, for the reason that he is so clear. There are times when it is easy to see that he has worked too long over his thought, and has corrected his original words too often. Patience is then needed to construct a passage after him; indeed, it sometimes seems as though the clauses of a paragraph were like the bits of a Chinese puzzle, to be turned this way and that before they can be fitted into place; but this is rare, and happens only when his mind flags a little, or his relentless conscience will not let him give up the expression of minute particulars. For the most part, and particularly when an ardent emotion or conviction carries him through equally long sentences with many clauses, the current of his thought runs clear, like rapids with the sunlight in them. It is noticeable to

a translator that no freedom is allowed by Balzac; the actual translated word or its closest equivalent must be used, or something of the meaning is lost. This is not so with other French writers, — George Sand, for instance; it often happens that one fairly synonymous word seems to do as well as another in rendering her meaning. Balzac, on the contrary, keeps a translator under his thumb. Sometimes, in the course of his long and fiery sentences some trifling word has been overlooked, and when the end is reached the meaning comes out crookedly; it is like dropping a stitch in a woman's knitting; it cannot be patched in; the work must be unravelled, the stitch picked up, and the whole reknitted. In much of the French literature of the present day a translator, and probably all foreigners who read French, are hampered by the self-consciousness of the writers, which seriously affects their style. The reader, or translator, has to consider not only the subject of a book and its presentation, but the personality of the writer, — an under-current of confidential communication must be kept up with a third element. This appears to a foreigner to vitiate a style. Balzac is free from this defect. His writings are absolutely impersonal. His thought speaks to you, never himself. He is not so unwise as to complicate that which he wishes to put into you by letting you see the hand that does it; though this in him is not so much a conscious self-restraint as the necessity of his genius, which saw his thought as a thing apart from himself.

Théophile Gautier, who had a delightfully rich and vivid style of his own, says: "The French language, refined away by the academicians of the seventeenth cen-

tury, is, when conformed to, only suitable for the expression of general ideas and the rendering of conventional forms in a vague way. In order to represent the multiplicity of his details, types, characters, architectures, household surroundings, etc., Balzac was forced to make for himself a special language composed of the technological terms of the arts and sciences, the studios, the street, the theatre itself. Any and every word which had a distinct thing to say was welcomed by him, and he would slash an incision into his sentences or complacently add parentheses to admit them. It was this that made superficial critics say that Balzac did not know how to write. He had, though he himself did not think so, a style, and a very fine style, — the logical and mathematical style of his idea." "As for style," said Sainte-Beuve, himself a purist, "he has it; delicate, subtle, liquid, picturesque, having no analogy whatever with tradition."

M. Marcel Barrière (his most important French critic of the present day) says, however: "We affirm that Balzac cared as little for elegance of style as he did for the plastic beauty of art; he did not possess the musical instinct in language so dear to the delicate literary mind. He was not sufficiently endowed with the sentiment of harmony inculcated by our ancestors, which made the triumph of Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and Chateaubriand." To an English mind the answer would seem to be that those writers were of colder natures, who could not see as Balzac saw; their style could never have represented his thought.[1]

[1] L'Œuvre de H. de Balzac, étude littéraire et philosophique; par Marcel Barrière, 1 vol., Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1890. M. Bar-

Balzac has been called the father of realism. Would that he were! He certainly is not the father of the present school of realists. That — whether in its most commonplace and puritanical exponents, or in Zola, or in the half-crazed brain of Tolstoï (whose original aspirations are so high above those of his admirers that he ought not to be classed with them; his being a great perception gone mad) — is the child of materialism. The question of realism, what it is and what it should be, will always be discussed from the point of view of each man's own temperament and perceptions. What a man sees, that he thinks real. Some can admit that others may see another real from theirs; others wish to impose their real on all minds, and seem unable to perceive that those who have higher perceptions of human nature can never be brought to accept views which, in their judgment, degrade it. Tell such writers that the true Real is the Ideal and they will smile at your nonsense; and yet the whole of morality, — morality of art, morality of life — is there. A great service would be done to morality if the realists of our *fin-de-siècle* had

rière has written an excellent critique of Balzac's books on certain lines, limited in some respects. His summings-up are less useful, being more conventional; but the book is a valuable contribution to Balzac literature. As we have said before, Balzac will live for the judgment of posterity. The present school of writers can judge him even less than the men of his own day; but all current criticism is valuable as *mémoires pour servir* of the periods through which Balzac's work passes before it comes to full comprehension. The short memoir by Mr. Frederick Wedmore in the "Great Writers" series stands alone in English literature (so far as the present writer is aware) for a just conception, although too limited, of Balzac as a man. It should be welcomed by all who study him.

the courage of their opinions and would say frankly: "Let us eat, and drink, and make money; the world is a muck-heap, but let us get what we can from it, and crow while we may, for to-morrow we die, and that's the end of it." Most of them will not say this, for, in truth, they do not think it; they are merely playing with their theory, — which is only a passing phase after all. But it is, none the less, immoral and degrading.

Balzac's realism is very different. In the dawn of his genius true realism was revealed to him. "To think is to see," he said. "Possibly," he added, "materialism and spiritualism express two sides of the same thing." Here we have the key-note to which he tuned himself; and he had an inward consciousness which sustained his thought. A discussion of Balzac's realism would be out of place here; the *Comédie Humaine* is the embodiment of it. There he ran the gamut of his conception of realism, — shrinking, as he says, from none of the consequences of his principles. And herein lies his morality. For Balzac is a moralist, — the greatest moralist of the nineteenth century; one who does not preach, but *shows* the truth. To discuss this matter fully would prolong it beyond the limits of this memoir; but we may dwell for a moment on one point of it. In his earliest youth, almost in his childhood, he had longed to meet a woman-angel, and the desire kept his spirit pure. When he entered life and saw the condition of womanhood, the pass to which woman had been brought and had brought herself, he set about — under a true inspiration, and with his natural instinct to take the part of the sorrowful and helpless, no matter what their vices were — to better her condition. How has he done

it? By presenting facts in their most awful reality; not sparing woman with any false tenderness or fear of outcry (no shrinking from the consequences here!), but warning her by his realism, teaching her by the eye to see the horror and the distortion of her position. He himself gives this as his deliberate purpose; it is, he says, by showing facts that he must bring men's minds to the emancipation of women and their higher education; and when he said this he had in view something far more fundamental than our present surface questions of woman's emancipation. If realism has the virtue that its followers attribute to it (and it has), this is what its virtue should accomplish; this is what Balzac sought to do for woman, leading her step by step from her lowest degradation in Cousine Bette up through Eugénie Grandet, Ève Séchard, Marguerite Claës, and others like them, to *Séraphita*, where the destiny of woman is presented as a series of lives ascending from love of self, love of others, love of heaven, till the end be won, — a book which M. Taine calls upon us to observe is the "consummation of Balzac's work, as the flower is that of its plant; a book in which the genius of the writer attains its complete expression, foreseen, explained, justified, and led up to by all his other work."

Yes, *Séraphita* was, indeed, the crown of his work; but he was destined to leave the world with much of that work unaccomplished. All was mapped out; and it stirs the feelings painfully to look along the vista of his plans and see what the world has lost. Among these projected works (a list of which will be found in the appendix) his thoughts particularly clung to the

hope of writing *Le Prêtre catholique*, the *Pathologie de la vie sociale*, the *Anatomie des Corps Enseignants*, and the *Monographie de la vertu*. "Looking at the work still to be done," he says, in his preface to the *Comédie Humaine*, "perhaps my readers will say, 'May your life be prolonged!' My own prayer is that I may not be so much tortured by men and events as I have been in the past, since the beginning of my great and terrible labor. Yet I have had one support, for which I return thanks to God. The highest talent of our day, the noblest characters, the truest friends, have clasped my hand, and said to me, 'Take courage!' Why should I not own that such proofs of affection, such testimonials given now and then by strangers, have upheld me in my career in spite of myself, in spite of unjust attacks, in spite of calumnies that have pursued me, — upheld me against disheartenment, and also against that too vivid hope, the expression of which has sometimes been mistaken for excessive self-love?"

Anecdotes that reveal the fancies and habits of a great mind and show it in action are precious, if they bear the stamp of truth; in Balzac's case they are invaluable, because so unguardedly natural. Here is one in the language of M. Léon Gozlan, somewhat abridged: —

"One evening I received a note from Balzac, dated Les Jardies, asking me to meet him the next day at three o'clock, in the Champs Élysées, between the Horses of Marly and the Café des Ambassadeurs. I must be punctual, he said, as the matter was important. The day was dull and chilly, the ground damp, a cold wind blowing. 'Let us walk fast,' said Balzac,

when we met, ' to keep up the circulation. I have just written a little tale for the first number of the "Revue Parisienne." I am rather pleased with it, that is, I shall be when I have found — that which you must help me to find to-day. But I must describe to you the principal personage, — in fact, the only personage in this little poem of morals, the grievous morals of our social epoch, such as the national politics of the last ten years have made them.' He thereupon described the personage he had created. ' Now,' he said, ' you 'll see what I want of you. For such a man, so extraordinary a man, I must have a name in keeping with his destiny; a name which explains and pictures and proclaims him; a name that shall be *his*, that could not possibly be the cognomen of any other. Well, it won't come to me; I have tried every possible vocal combination without success. I will not baptize my type with a stupid name. We must find one that shall fit the man as the gum the tooth, the root the hair, the nail the flesh. Don't you understand?'

"' No.'

"' No? don't you admit that there are names that remind you of a diadem, a sword, a helmet, a flower?'

"' No.'

"' Names that veil and reveal a poet, a satiric wit, a profound philosopher, a famous painter?'

"' No, no.'

"' I know better,' said Balzac, much provoked. ' Names are given on high before they are given in this low world. It is a mystery, to which it is not allowable to apply the petty rules of our trivial reasoning. I am not the only one who believes in this miraculous con-

junction of man with his name, which he bears as a divine or devilish talisman, to light his way on earth, or burn him up. Great minds have always shared this belief; and strange to say, the masses do, too.'

"'Why don't you make a name?'

"'I tell you I can't. I am worn out with work. I have tried, but it won't come. We must discover it?'

"'If it exists.'

"'It does exist,' said Balzac, solemnly, 'and you must suggest a way to find it. That is what I want you for.'

"After reflecting a few moments I said, 'Let us read the signs in the streets; there you'll find all kinds of names, pompous, ridiculous, queer, paradoxical; enough to rejoice the heart of a vaudevillist; virtuous names, wicked names, brigands' names; these last are usually those of chandlers and confectioners.'

"The idea delighted Balzac. Alas, I had not foreseen to what it would lead.

"'Where shall we begin?' he said.

"'Why, here,' I answered.

"We were just then leaving the court of the Louvre, and entering the rue Coq-Saint-Honoré. It was not to be expected that our first steps would produce anything. Names were plentiful, but they had no physiognomies. He looked one side of the street, I the other, our noses in the air, and our feet heaven knows where, which produced much jostling with pedestrians, who probably took us for blind men. Down the rue du Coq, through the rue Saint-Honoré to the Palais-Royal, and all the collateral streets to the rue Vivienne, the place de la Bourse, the rue Neuve Vivienne, the bou-

levard Montmartre. At the corner of the rue Montmartre I broke down; alarmed that Balzac refused to accept any of the names I pointed out to him, I declined to go a step further.

"'It is always the way with everything,' said Balzac. 'Christopher Columbus abandoned by his crews! I shall land on the soil of America alone. You may go.'

"'You are in the midst of many Americas,' I retorted, 'and you won't land; you are very unreasonable; you have rejected splendid names. It is Christopher Columbus himself who is to blame.'

"'Fatigue makes a man more unjust than anger; I know that myself,' said Balzac. 'Here, take my arm, and go as far as Saint-Eustache.'

"'But no farther?'

"'So be it.'

"But he contrived before we reached Saint-Eustache to drag me through the length and breadth of the rues du Mail, de Cléry, du Cadran, des Fossés-Montmartre, and the place de la Victoire, filled with magnificent Alsacian names; in the midst of which I declared to him that if he did not make an immediate choice I would leave him on the spot.

"'There is only the rue du Bouloi left,' said Balzac; 'don't refuse me the rue du Bouloi, and then we 'll go back to Les Jardies for dinner.'

"I granted him the rue du Bouloi, and it was at the farther end of that street that Balzac, — never shall I forget it! — having glanced through a little gate, an oblong, narrow, mean little gate opening into a damp alley, suddenly changed color, quivered all over, uttered a cry, and said to me: —

"'There! there! there! read it.'

"And I read — MARCAS.

"'MARCAS,' he muttered. 'Marcas; what a name! Marcas, — the name of names; Marcas! we will look no farther.'

"'So be it,' I said; 'I ask no better.'

"'Marcas; my hero is Marcas,' he went on; 'philosopher, writer, statesman, poet ignored; it is all there. Marcas! I shall call him Z. Marcas, to add a flame, a plume, a star to the name. Z. Marcas must be some great and unknown artist, engraver, carver, or silversmith, like Benvenuto Cellini.'

"'I can soon find out,' I said.

"Leaving Balzac in adoration before the house, I inquired of the concierge. Returning towards the street, I shouted from afar: —

"'Tailor!'

"'Tailor!' Balzac was silent for a moment; his head drooped. Then he looked up proudly.

"'He deserved a better fate,' he said; 'but no matter; I will immortalize him.'"

Those who have read *Le Lys dans la Vallée* cannot fail to remember the exquisite story of the wild-flowers, and perhaps if they studied it deeply they may have been puzzled to identify a certain herb, the description and the name of which do not agree. Here is the explanation. The anecdote is told by Léon Gozlan.

"Yes," said Balzac, laying down three or four volumes that he carried under his arm, "that is Fenimore Cooper's last work. It is fine, it is grand, it is intensely interesting. I know no one but Walter Scott

who has ever risen to that grandeur and serenity of coloring. . . . When I conceived the idea of *Le Lys dans la Vallée* I had, like Cooper, the idea of giving scenery a splendid part in the work. Full of this idea, I plunged into natural pantheism like a pagan. I made myself tree, horizon, stream, star, brooklet, light. And as science is a good helper in everything, I wanted to know the names and properties of certain plants which I meant to bring into my descriptions. My first desire was to learn the names of all those little herbs we tread upon in country places, along the roadsides, in the meadows, everywhere. I began by asking my own gardener. 'Oh, Monsieur,' he said, 'nothing easier to know than that.' 'What is it, then, since it is so easy?' 'Well, some is luzern; this is clover; that is sainfoin.' 'No, no, that is n't what I mean. I want to know what you call all these little herbs under my feet; here, I'll gather a tuft of them.' 'Oh, that, monsieur, that 's grass.' 'Yes, but the name of each herb, long, short, straight, curved, smooth, prickly, rough, velvety, dry, damp, dark-green, pale-green.' 'Well, they are all called grass.' I could n't get anything out of him but 'Grass.' The next day a friend came to see me; he happened to be a great traveller, and I said to him: 'You, who are such a botanist and have been all over the world, do you know the names of the little herbs we have under our feet?' 'Bless me!' he said, 'what herbs?' 'These,' I said, and I plucked some and put them into his hand. 'The fact is,' he said, after a few moments' examination, 'I don't really know any flora but that of Malabar. If we were in India now I could tell you the names of countless little plants, but here —'

'Here you are just as ignorant as I am?' 'I admit it,' he said. The next day I went to the Jardin des Plantes and questioned one of the most learned professors in the institution. 'Oh, Monsieur de Balzac,' he said, 'What a thing to ask me! Here we are busy with the larch and tamarisk, and other such families; but life is too short to come down to those little herbs that are nothing at all. They concern your salad-woman. But joking apart,' he added, 'where are you going to put your novel?' 'In Touraine.' 'Very good; then the first peasant you meet in Touraine can tell you more than the most learned of us here.' Down I went to Touraine, and there I found the peasants just as ignorant as the rest; so that when I wrote *Le Lys dans la Vallée* I found it impossible to describe with perfect accuracy that carpet of verdure which it would have given me such happiness to picture blade by blade."

M. Taine says of the description in *Le Lys dans la Vallée* to which the above anecdote refers: "Oriental poetry has nothing more dazzling, more magnificent; it is intoxicating, luxurious; we float in a sky of light and perfume; all the sensuous joys of a summer's day enter both soul and body, quivering, murmuring, like a tumultuous bevy of many-colored butterflies." [1]

[1] Nouveaux Essais de critique et d'histoire, par H. Taine. 1 vol. 3ème éd. Hachette et cie., Paris, 1880. The essay on Balzac should be read. It contains a splendid flux of words in which, truth to tell, there is less of Balzac than we might expect; but wherever a judgment is given, whether for or against him, it is worth reading, though colored by M. Taine's fancy, — as where he calls him "a business man in debt." Werdet, who ought to know, and who is corroborated by all we find of Balzac's life, says: "He was an honest man; an honest man in debt, and not a 'business man in debt,' as M. H. Taine avers."

During the twelve years which we are now considering Balzac wrote and published seventy-nine novels and tales, — a stupendous work when we consider the wealth of ideas embodied and developed in them. The reader is referred to the appendix, where a list of each year's work will be found. So busy a life would seem to allow of no holiday, but his habit was to alternate long periods of intense application with shorter periods of relaxation, employed, naturally and perhaps unconsciously, in gathering the experience with which to pursue his work. He made, as we have seen, frequent visits to the provinces, and yearly trips to foreign countries. In September, 1833, he was at Neufchâtel, where he first met Madame Hanska; in 1834 he was at Geneva; in 1835 at Vienna; the famous journey to Sardinia was in 1838, and the following year he was in Northern Italy, and again at Vienna. After that he travelled little for four years, but went much into society. His sister tells us that he loved life and enjoyed its pleasures; he was very hospitable, and the cheery dinners given in his various homes still live in the narratives of his friends.

He remained in the rue Cassini for eight years; from there he moved to the rue des Batailles at Chaillot, where he had the enjoyment, Gautier tells us, of a magnificent view over Paris. His desire seems ever to have been for heights. In his studious youth he sought that highest point in Père-Lachaise (the spot where he now lies) whence he could see all Paris; and his dream of future earthly rest, as he tells us himself, was always for a home on a mountain. True to this feeling, he bought, in 1838, three acres of land at Ville-d'Avray, where he

erected the famous pavilion already described in a letter to Madame Carraud. A past historic interest was connected with the place, which was called Les Jardies, where, according to Saint-Simon, the courtiers of Louis XIV. were lodged when the king was at Versailles. In after years it gained a third celebrity as the home where Gambetta lived and met his death. "Nothing can exceed the beauty of my view," says Balzac, lovingly. "My house stands on the other side of the mountain, or perhaps I should say the hill of Saint-Cloud; on the north it joins the royal park; to the west I see the whole valley of Ville-d'Avray; to the east I soar above Sèvres, and my eyes take in an immense horizon, with Paris in the far distance, its smoky atmosphere reaching as far as the slopes of Meudon and Belleville, beyond which I can see the plains of Montrouge and the high-road to Orléans, which leads to Tours. The whole is of strange magnificence and full of ravishing contrasts. The valley depths have the dewy freshness, the shade, the hillocks, the verdure of the Swiss valleys. Forests and woodland everywhere; to the north the fine trees of the royal domain."

Here he camped rather than lived, for he never had the means to furnish his little home. Nevertheless, it was the scene of much generous hospitality. It was entered from the road which passed behind it. The front-door and hall (if we are to believe the friend who thus describes it) were in the garret, "and you entered the house like wine being poured into a bottle." The steep declivity in front, where his fancy pictured trees, never grew anything taller in his time than shrubs, which, he remarks exultantly, were nearly tall enough

to hide Turc, his Saint-Bernard dog. But his flowers were beautiful; it gave him as much happiness to watch their growth as to hear of his successes in the world; and, above all, he had the free air for which his spirit longed. There was, alas! a reverse to the picture in the crumbling walls; but this was not really as bad as his imagination made it. One would think from the doleful moan he sent to Madame Carraud that he was living in a sort of Herculaneum, with his household gods in fragments about him; but, in truth, it was only the garden walls that toppled over, and, after rebuilding them several times to pacify an angry neighbor, who objected to heaps of stones upon his property, Balzac bought the adjoining ground, "in order," he said, "that the stones might at least rattle down on his own land."

During part of the time when he lived at Les Jardies he kept a room in Paris, in the rue Richelieu, for convenience; but in 1843 he took an apartment at Passy (19 rue Basse) an outlying arrondissement of Paris, where he remained until he bought the small hôtel Beaujon in the rue Fortunée (now the rue Balzac), which he fitted up luxuriously in the long delayed hope of his marriage with Madame Hanska, transporting there his hidden collection of works of art of all kinds.

His expansive nature, expansive in spite of his strange secretiveness in deeper ways, sought intercourse with men in his periods of release from work. Among these friends he counted the best men of his day. Frédéric Soulié, Charles de Bernard, Charles Nodier, Victor Hugo, Heine, whom he often visited, Gavarni, Boulanger, Beyle, whose works he greatly admired, Baron Barchou de Penhoën, a former comrade at

Vendôme, Hector Berlioz, Liszt, Alfred de Musset, and the man who seems to have been closest to him in affection, and also to have received the shadow of confidences not made to others, — Théophile Gautier. Many of these men were far more prosperous than he, the greatest of them, in their mutual career; but he seems to have been truly incapable, as George Sand said he was, of envy. Otherwise one might suppose that his feelings would have been hurt when he found the way barred against his entrance to the Academy, that Immortal body which was less mongrel in those days than it is now. But he behaved with dignity, and withdrew his name when failure seemed probable. "The matter does not stir my feelings very much," he said; "some persons think not at all, but they are mistaken. If I do get there, so much the better; if I do not, no matter." It is characteristic of him to feel thus. He was totally without personal vanity or self-seeking. Self-assertive as to his work, absorbed in his ideas, convinced himself and eager to persuade others of their paramount value, he certainly was; but his individual self was another thing; and it is often affecting to notice how little thought or care he seemed to give to it. Léon Gozlan says of him: "Indifferent to personal fame, Balzac never gave a thought to what men might want to know of him apart from his books, — of his personal opinions, his private life and character, and his share in the daily events of the world."

The following letter was addressed to those Academicians who intended to support his nomination. It is characteristic of Victor Hugo that he paid no attention to the request, and his ballot was cast for Balzac as a matter of principle.

"My dear Nodier, — I have learned to-day, quite positively, that my situation as to fortune is one of the objections which will be brought up against me at the Academy, and I write, with deep grief, to ask you to give your influence elsewhere than in my favor.

"If I cannot enter the Academy on account of my honorable poverty, I will never present myself for admission in the day when prosperity smiles upon me. I have written the same thing to Victor Hugo, who takes an interest in my election.

"God grant you health, my kind Nodier."

It is observable in Balzac's correspondence that he says little or nothing of his intercourse with society; yet there cannot be a doubt in the minds of those who study his work that he saw much of the world, and was in close relations with many phases of social life, particularly with women, who are the essence of it. It is impossible that he could have written of women under all aspects as he did unless he had a close personal knowledge of them. Before he became completely absorbed in Madame Hanska in 1843, there must have been a time when he saw much of many women, and may even have contemplated marriage with more than one of them. But the evidence of this period in his correspondence is slight, and his sister so distinctly says that he concealed all traces of it that a discussion of what it may have been is useless. It certainly did not influence him seriously as a man, though it was highly serviceable to his work. He remarks himself of this phase of his life that skin-deep affections did not suit him: *Les amitiés d'épiderme ne me vont pas.*

CHAPTER VII.

JUDGMENT OF CONTEMPORARY FRIENDS.

George Sand, with her good, broad mind, appreciated Balzac's nature, though she could not agree with his art (her own being so different), nor perceive the higher reaches of his spirit. No kinder or truer words, so far as they go, have been said of him than hers :[1] —

"To say of a man of genius that he was essentially good and kind is the highest praise that I am able to bestow. All superiority must contend with so many obstacles and sufferings that the man who pursues his mission of genius with patience and gentleness is a great man, whatever meaning we may give to the term. Patience and gentleness are strength ; none was ever stronger than Balzac.

"Before recalling his other claims to the attention of posterity I hasten to render him this justice, which has not been sufficiently rendered by his contemporaries. I saw him often under the shock of great injustices, both literary and personal, and I never heard him say an evil word of any one. He went his painful way with a smile in his soul. Full of himself, passionately eager about his art, he was, nevertheless, modest, after his

[1] Autour de la table, par George Sand, 1 vol., Michel Lévy Frères, Nouvelle édition, Paris, 1875.

fashion, under an exterior of assumption which was only the naïveté of an artist (great artists are great children), and in spite of an appearance of adoration for his personal merits which was, in reality, nothing else than enthusiasm for his work.

"Balzac's private life was very mysterious, and it has been, as I think, very ill understood by those who were initiated into it. What I know of it, from his own confidences, is of great originality and covers no black spots whatever. But these revelations, which have nothing in them that reflects upon his memory, require amplifications which would be out of place here and would not assist the purpose, chiefly literary, which I have set before me. It is sufficient to say that his sovereign end and aim in concealing his life and actions, his search for the absolute, in other words, his great work, was Freedom, the possession of his hours, the solitude of his laborious nights, — the creation, in short, of his *Comédie Humaine.*

"Balzac was called during his lifetime the 'most prolific of novelists.' Since his death he has been called the first of novelists. Without making any invidious categories which might wound illustrious contemporaries, it will be strictly true, I think, to say that such a term is not praise enough for a power like his. They are not novels, these imperishable books of the great critic, as novels were understood before his day. He is, and pre-eminently, the critic of human life; he has written, not alone for the pleasures of the imagination, but for the archives of moral history, the memoirs of the half-century which has now just passed. He has done for that historic period what another great, but

less thorough worker, Alexis Monteil, endeavored to do for the France of the past.

"The novel was to Balzac a frame and pretext for an almost universal examination of the ideas, sentiments, customs, habits, legislation, arts, trades, costumes, localities, in short, of all that constituted the lives of his contemporaries. Thanks to him, no earlier epoch of our country will be known to the future like ours. What would we not give, we seekers of to-day, if each vanished half-century had been transmitted to us living by a Balzac. We make our children read a fragment of the past, reconstructed with immense labor of erudition, 'Rome in the time of Augustus,' and the day will come when learned men, writing such histories, will turn to the France of Balzac's period and draw their information from authenticity itself. The criticism of contemporaries on such and such a character presented in Balzac's books, on the style, the method, the intentions and the manner of the author, will then seem what already they are beginning to seem, secondary considerations. The future will not call this vast work to account for imperfections which appear in all creations of the human brain; on the contrary, it will value even the prolixity, the excess of detail, which to us seem defects, and yet may not wholly satisfy the interest and the curiosity of the readers of the future.

"Let us say, then, to the readers of the year 2000, or 3000, who will still bear some resemblance to the men of to-day, no matter what progress they have been able to make, — to those perfected spirits who will have our needs, our passions, and our dreams, as, in spite of our own progress, we too have the passions, needs, and

dreams of the human natures which preceded us, — to them let us say that those among us who have the honor to be called to testify before the work of Balzac declare: 'This is truth,' — not absolute philosophical truth, which Balzac did not seek and this era has not found; but the true reality of our intellectual, physical, and moral condition. This collected whole of simple narratives, these parables seldom complicated, this multitude of fictitious personages, these interiors, châteaus, garrets, these myriad aspects of country and city life, all this work of fancy is, thanks to a gift of marvellous clear-sightedness and to the exercise of extreme conscientiousness, a mirror in which imagination has shown reality. Do not seek in this history of facts the names of the models who passed before this magic glass; the types it has preserved are anonymous. Nevertheless, know this (for here is a great prodigy of art): each of these types sums up in itself a whole variety of the human species; and Balzac, who sought the absolute in a certain order of things, came near finding in his own work the solution of a problem unknown until his day, — complete reality in complete fiction. Yes, readers of the future, the men of 1830 were as bad, as good, as crazy, and as virtuous, as intelligent and as stupid, as romantic and as matter-of-fact, as prodigal and as keen after gain as Balzac shows them to you. His contemporaries have not all been willing to admit it. That need not astonish you. All, nevertheless, have read his works in which they felt their own hearts beating; they have read them with anger or — with exultation.

"If we judge Balzac in detail, he cannot, any more than other great masters of the present and the past,

escape all critical severity. But when we examine in its totality his mighty work, be we critic, public, or fellow-artists, we must all agree, or wellnigh agree, on one point, namely, — that in the class of work to which it belongs nothing more complete ever issued from the brain of a writer. I myself, when I have read, one by one, these extraordinary books as they came from the press, I did not like them all. Some shocked my tastes, my convictions, my sympathies. At times I was tempted to say, 'This is too long,' or 'That is wearisome.' Others seemed to me fantastic, and made me say to myself with regret, 'What is the good of it; what does he mean?' But when Balzac, having found the secret of his destiny, and solved the enigma of his genius, grasped that deep and admirable idea of the *Comédie Humaine*, when, by laborious and ingenious classification, he welded all parts of his work into a logical whole, each of those parts, even those I least liked on their first appearance, took their rightful place and assumed their real value. Each of these books is, in fact, a page of the great work, which would be incomplete without this important page.

"For this reason it is necessary to read the whole of Balzac. Nothing is unimportant to the general work; and we soon perceive that in this immeasurable stretch of imagination, to imagination he has sacrificed nothing. Every book has been for him an awesome study. And when we think that he had not, like Dumas, the power of a marvellous memory, like Lamartine facility of style, like Alphonse Karr poetry ready-made in his eyes (not to speak of a dozen special qualities gratuitously bestowed on others by nature), but that, on the contrary,

the labor of execution was long extremely difficult to him, that form was constantly intractable to his will, that ten years of his life were sacrificed on experiments, and finally that he was ever struggling with material cares, battling with all his strength to reach a time when he might live in peace, — thinking of all these things one asks one's self what angel and what demon watched at his side and revealed to him the good and the evil, the real and the ideal, the history of which he has bequeathed to us.

"One of my friends who knew Balzac presented me to him, not in the character of *muse du département*, but as a worthy provincial woman amazed at his talent. This was the truth. Though Balzac had not at that time produced his greatest works, I was much impressed by his novel and original manner, and thought of him even then as a master to study. He was living in the rue Cassini, in a cheerful little *entresol* near the Observatory. It was there, I think, that I made the acquaintance of Emmanuel Arago, a man who afterwards became a friend of mine, and was then a mere lad. One fine day Balzac, having made a good sale of a book, affected to despise his *entresol*, and wished to leave it; but after due reflection he decided to remain, and contented himself by transforming his little rooms into a nest of boudoirs *à la marquise*. That done, he invited me to eat ices within the walls, now hung with silk and edged with lace. I laughed heartily, not dreaming that he felt any serious want of such *vain luxury*, and supposing it was nothing more than a passing fancy. I was mistaken; these needs of a dainty imagination became the tyrants of

his life; to satisfy them, he often sacrificed the commonest comfort. Henceforth he lived somewhat in this way, — lacking necessaries in the midst of his superfluities, and depriving himself of soup and coffee rather than of silver-ware and Chinese porcelains. Soon reduced to amazing expedients not to part with the gewgaws that pleased his eye, artist by fancy, child of golden dreams, he lived through his fancy in a fairy palace; obstinate withal, he accepted deliberately all anxieties and all deprivations rather than let reality dispossess him of his dream.

"I did not say much of my own literary projects to Balzac. He did not believe in them, or rather he did not care to examine whether I was capable of anything. I did not ask his advice; he would have told me that he kept it for himself, and he would have said it as much from ingenuous modesty as from ingenuous egotism; for he had, as I have said, his way of being modest under an appearance of arrogance, a fact which I found out later with agreeable surprise. And as for his egotism, he had his reactions to self-devotion and generosity. His company was very agreeable; a little fatiguing in its rush of words to me, who am not ready enough with an answer to vary the subjects of conversation sufficiently; but his soul was of great serenity, and I never, at any moment, saw him ill-humored. He would climb, with his big stomach, all the five stories of the house on the quay Michel where I lived, and come in puffing and laughing and talking before he could get his breath. Among his intimate friends he had a nickname, which he always signed to his letters; with me it had passed into a habit to call him "Dom

Mar." He used to pick up my manuscript from the table and cast his eyes over it as if he meant to inform himself of what it was about; but almost immediately his thoughts would go back to the work he had in hand; and he would begin to relate it to me, and I must say I found that more instructive than the hindrances which La Touche, disheartening doubter, opposed to my ideas.

"I had no theories of any kind when I began to write, and I think I had never had any when the wish to write a novel placed a pen in my hand. That did not prevent my instincts from making for me, without my knowledge, the theory which I will now explain and which I have generally followed without taking deliberate account of it, — a theory which is still, at the present moment under discussion.

"According to this theory, a novel should be a work of poetry as much as of analysis. It must have true situations and true characters, even real ones, grouped around a type which is to present and sum up the principal sentiment or idea of the book. This type usually represents the passion of love, because nearly all novels are histories of love. According to my theory (and here is where it begins) this type, this love we must idealize, not fearing to give it all the powers to which we consciously aspire ourselves, and all the sufferings which we have seen or of which we have felt the tortures. But, in any case, that type, that love, must not be degraded by the hazard of events; it must either die or triumph; and we must not fear to give it an exceptional importance in life, powers above the ordinary, charms or sufferings which go far beyond the usual limit of human things, and even beyond the probable as judged by

the majority of minds. To sum up this theory briefly, it is: the idealization of the sentiment which makes the subject, leaving to the art of the novelist the duty of placing that subject in conditions and in a frame of reality suitable to bring it vividly into relief.

"Is this theory a true one? I think it is; but it is not, and ought not to be absolute. Balzac, after a time, made me comprehend, by the variety and force of his compositions, that it was allowable to sacrifice the idealization of a subject to the truth of a picture, to the just criticism of society, to humanity itself. Balzac summed this up completely when he said to me later: 'You are seeking man as he should be; I take him such as he is. Believe me, we are both right. The two roads lead to the same place. I, too, like exceptional beings — I am one myself. In fact, I need them as foils to my commonplace beings; and I never sacrifice them unless under necessity. But commonplace beings interest me more than they interest you. I make them grow, I idealize them, inversely, in their ugliness and stupidity. I give their deformities grotesque proportions. You can't do that; and you are right not to be willing to look at beings and things which would give you the nightmare. Idealize in the lovely and the beautiful; that's a woman's work.'

"Balzac said this without any concealed disdain or disguised sarcasm. He was sincere in the brotherly feeling with which he spoke, and he has idealized woman far too much to be suspected of any degrading theory about her.

"Balzac travelled a great deal, and his friends in Paris often lost all trace of him. He had bought a

little house at Ville-d'Avray, called Les Jardies, and from there he dated many of the letters which he wrote in Russia, Italy, and elsewhere. Nevertheless, he lived at Les Jardies a good deal, and did an enormous amount of work there. Also he passed whole summers, months or weeks, in the provinces, — at Angoulême, at Issoudun in Touraine, and with me in Berry. He was also in Sardinia, where he believed, or pretended to believe, he should find strange things. He searched for treasures and found none but those he bore within him, — his intellect, his spirit of observation, his marvellous capacity, his strength, his gayety, his goodness of heart, in a word, his genius.

"The last of his journeys resulted in his marriage; but our poor Dom Mar did not long enjoy domestic happiness. A disease of the heart, about which he had often spoken to me and of which he thought himself cured, carried him off at the end of four months of married life. He was shipwrecked in port, that bold and resolute mariner. All his life he had desired to marry a woman of quality, to have no debts, to find in his own home affection and intellectual companionship. He deserved to attain his wish, for he had done gigantic service, fulfilled a splendid mission, and abused but one thing — work. Sober in all respects, his morals were pure; he dreaded excesses as the death of talent; he cherished women by his heart or his head, and his life from early youth was that of an anchorite; for, although he has written some coarse books and passed in his day for an expert in gallantry (having written the *Physiologie du Mariage* and the *Contes Drolatiques*), he was much less rabelaisian than benedictine. He loved

chastity as a choice thing, and attacked the sex only through curiosity; when he found a curiosity equal to his own he worked the mine with the cynicism of a confessor; that is how he himself expressed it. But when he met with health of mind and body (I repeat his own words) he was happy as a child in being able to speak of true love and rise into the higher regions of emotion.

"He was a trifle hypercritical, but naïvely so; and this great anatomist of life let us see that he learned all, both of good and evil, by observation of facts or contemplation of the idea, not by experience. Attached, I know not why, to the cause of monarchy to which he thought himself bound, he was so impartial by nature that the noblest personages in his books are often republicans or socialists. There were times when he seemed to have the tastes of a parvenu; they were really at heart the tastes of an artist. He loved curiosities far more than luxury. He dreamed of avarice, and ruined himself constantly. He boasted of despoiling others, and never robbed any one but himself. In certain of his books he has put his ideal in the boudoir of a duchess; elsewhere we find it in the customs of an atelier. He has seen the amusing side and also the grand side of all social destinies, of all parties, all systems. He has laughed at the stupid Bonapartists, and pitied the unfortunate Bonapartists; he has respected all disinterested convictions. He charmed the ambitious youth of the century with golden dreams; he flung it in the dust or the mud by laying bare before it the end of base ambitions, dissolute women, faithless friends, shame, remorse. He has branded on the forehead those great ladies whom he forced his young men

to adore. He has swept away the millions and destroyed the temples of delight in which his fancy revelled, to show, behind these chimeras, that toil and honor alone remain erect amid the ruins. He has pictured, *con amore*, the seductions of vice, and vigorously proclaimed the horrors of its contagion. He has seen all and said all, comprehended all, and divined all — how then can he be immoral? Impartiality is eminently sound and healthy for good minds; the minds it could corrupt are corrupted already, and so corrupted that impartial truth is unable to heal them.

"Balzac has been reproached for having no principles because he has, as I think, no positive convictions on questions of fact in religion, art, politics, or even love. But nowhere in his books do I see vice made respectable or virtue degraded in the reader's eyes. If virtue succumbs, if vice triumphs, the meaning of the book is not left doubtful; society is condemned.

"It would, indeed, be puerile to declare Balzac a writer without defects. He would have been, in that case, the first whom nature ever created, and in all probability the last of his kind. He had, and he knew it himself better than those who have said so, essential faults; a labored style, false taste in certain expressions, a noticeable lack of proportion in the composition of his works. Eloquence and poetry came to him only when he ceased to search for them. He toiled over his work too long, and often spoilt it by corrections. These are all great defects; but when they are redeemed by such merits a man must be — as he said ingenuously of himself, and as he had the right to say — devilishly strong."

A critic of our day has said of Gautier's portrait of

Balzac that it was not critical. This may be true in the sense in which it was said, but the portrait will last long after the criticism of periods and of schools has passed away. It is a true picture of the man's nature, and the more valuable because Gautier could not have shared any of Balzac's great beliefs, while perceiving, in a measure, the spirit that gave birth to them. Was it the power of an inner man making itself felt upon his naturally sympathetic and receptive mind through his affections? At any rate, he has left us the only contemporaneous portrait of Balzac, written by a male friend, which is of value. It is given here somewhat abridged.[1]

"When I saw Balzac, who was a year older than the century, for the first time, he was about thirty-six, and his personality was one of those that are never forgotten. In his presence Shakspeare's words in Julius Cæsar came to my memory; before him, 'nature might stand up and say to all the world, "This was a man?"' He wore the monk's habit of white flannel or cashmere, in which, some time later, he made Louis Boulanger paint him. What fancy had led him to choose, in preference to all other costumes, this particular one, which he always wore, I do not know. Perhaps it symbolized to his eyes the cloistral life to which his work condemned him; and, benedictine of romance, he wore the robe. However that may be, it became him wonderfully. He boasted, showing me his spotless sleeves, that he never dropped the least spot of

[1] Portraits contemporains par Théophile Gautier, 1 vol. G. Charpentier et Cie 5ème éd. Paris. 1886.

ink upon it, 'for,' he added, 'a true literary man ought to be clean at his work.'

"The gown was flung back, disclosing the neck of an athlete or a bull, round as the section of a column, without visible muscles, and of a satiny whiteness which contrasted with the stronger tones of the face. At this period Balzac, who was then in the vigor of his age, showed signs of a robust health little in keeping with the romantic pallor then in vogue. His pure Tourainean blood glowed in his full cheeks with a healthy crimson, and warmly colored those good lips, thick and curved, and ever laughing, which a slight moustache and an imperial defined, without concealing. The nose which was square at the end, divided into two lobes, and furnished with nostrils that opened widely, had a thoroughly original and individual character; so that Balzac, posing for his bust, commended it to the sculptor, David of Angers; 'Pay attention to my nose,' he said; 'my nose is a world.' The forehead was handsome, vast, noble, and noticeably whiter than the rest of the face, with no lines but a perpendicular one, which started from the root of the nose, the bump of locality making a very decided projection above the eyebrows. His thick hair, which was long, wiry, and black, was thrown back over his head like a lion's mane. As to the eyes, there were never any like them; they had a life, a light, an inconceivable magnetism; the white of the eyeballs was pure, limpid, with a blueish tinge, like that of an infant or a virgin, inclosing two black diamonds, dashed at moments with gold reflections, — eyes to make an eagle drop his lids, eyes to read through walls and into bosoms, or to terrify a

furious wild beast, the eyes of a sovereign, a seer, a subjugator.

"The habitual expression of the face was that of puissant hilarity, of Rabelaisian and monachal joy (the frock no doubt contributing to the idea) which made you think of friar Jean des Entommeures; but dignified withal, and uplifted by a mind of the first order.

"As usual, Balzac had risen at midnight, and had worked until my arrival. His features showed no sign of fatigue, except that of a slight brownness beneath the eyelids, and he was gayety itself during the whole breakfast. Little by little, the conversation turned on literature, and he complained of the difficulties of the French language. Style troubled him much, and he sincerely thought he had none; it is true that at this time the critics, as a rule, denied him any. The school of Hugo, lovers of the sixteenth century and the middle-ages, learned in form, rhythm, structure, periods, rich in words, trained in prose by the gymnastics of verse, following always a master under certain fixed conventions, thought little of any writing that was not 'well written;' that is to say, elegant in tone and polished beyond measure; and they thought, moreover, that the presentation of modern manners was useless, vulgar, and wanting in 'lyricism.' Balzac, in spite of the vogue he was beginning to acquire with the public, was not admitted among the gods of romanticism, and he knew it. Though they read his books eagerly enough, they did not dwell on the serious aspect of them; in fact, even to his admirers, he was long 'the most prolific of our novel-writers,' and nothing more. This seems amazing to us now, but I can answer for

the truth of it. Consequently, he took unwearying pains to form his style, and in his great anxiety for correctness he would consult those who were far inferior to him. He told me that before putting his name to any of his books he had written under various pseudonyms a score of volumes 'to unlimber his hand.'

"But to return to the breakfast. While talking, Balzac played with his knife or his fork, and I noticed that his hands were of rare beauty, the hands of a prelate, white, with tapering, dimpled fingers, the nails polished and rosy. He cherished his hands, and smiled with pleasure when any one looked at them, attaching a sense of race and aristocracy to their beauty. Lord Byron said in a note, with visible satisfaction, that Ali Pasha complimented him on the smallness of his ear, from which he had inferred he was a gentleman. Such a remark about his hands would have pleased Balzac more than any praise of his books. He had, in fact, a slight prejudice against those whose extremities were clumsy.

"I left him, after agreeing to write for the 'Chronique de Paris' (he was then starting it), in which appeared my 'Tour en Belgique,' 'La Morte Amoureuse,' the 'Chaine d'or,' and other works. Charles de Bernard, another of the young men whom Balzac called to his assistance, wrote his 'Femme de quarante ans' and the 'Rose jaune' for the 'Chronique.' Balzac had lately invented the 'woman of thirty;' his imitator added two lustres to that already venerable age, and his heroine had an equal success.

"Whoever knew Balzac familiarly is able to find in the *Comédie Humaine* a crowd of curious details on his character and on his work, — more especially in his first

books, in which he had not entirely freed himself from his personality, and lacking *subjects* to observe, he dissected himself. For instance, the story of *Facino Cane* contains precious indications of the life he led in his garret as a young aspirant of fame. They are doubly precious because they throw light on one side of Balzac's life which is very little known, and reveal in him the consciousness of that powerful faculty of intuition which he possessed in so high a degree, and without which the realization of his great work would have been impossible. Balzac, like Vishnu, the Hindu god, possessed the gift of *avatar*, — namely, that of incarnating himself in different bodies, and of living in them at his pleasure; with this difference, that the number of Vishnu's avatars is limited to ten, while those of Balzac are innumerable; and what is more, he could evoke them at will. Strange as it may seem to say so in this nineteenth century, Balzac was a Seer. His power as an observer, his discernment as a physiologist, his genius as a writer, do not sufficiently account for the infinite variety of the two or three thousand types which play a rôle, more or less important, in his human comedy. He did not copy them; he lived them ideally. He wore their clothes, contracted their habits, moved in their surroundings, *was themselves* during the necessary time. Through this faculty came those sustained and logical characters, which never contradict and never duplicate one another; personalities endowed with a deep and inmost reality, who, to use one of his own expressions, compete for their civil rights. Red blood flows in their veins in place of the ink which ordinary writers infuse into their creations.

"And yet Balzac, immense in brain, penetrating physiologist, profound observer, intuitive spirit, did not possess the literary gift. In him yawned an abyss between thought and form. Sometimes he despaired of ever crossing it. Into it he flung volume after volume, nights of toil without number, essay upon essay, without ever filling the gulf; a whole library of unacknowledged books went into it. A less robust will would have been discouraged and overcome; but Balzac, happily, had unshaken confidence in his genius, which all others ignored. He willed to be a great man, and he became one, by the incessant projection of that fluid, more powerful than electricity, of which he has made such subtle analysis in *Louis Lambert.*

"Contrary to the writers of the romantic school, who were all remarkable for the fearlessness and facility of their execution, producing their fruits almost at the same time as their flowers (a double forth-putting which seemed involuntary), Balzac, the equal of them all in genius, could not find his method of expression, or found it only after infinite labor. Hugo says, in one of his prefaces, with his Castilian pride: 'I do not understand the art of soldering a fine thing over a defective one; I correct the defect in another volume.' But Balzac riddled with erasures his tenth proof; and when he found me sending back to the 'Chronique' the proof of an article (written in a flash at the corner of a table) with no corrections except the typographical ones, he could not believe, however satisfied he might be otherwise, that I had done my best. 'It might have been better if you had gone over it two or three more times,' he would say.

"He used to preach to me a curious literary hygiene, with himself for an example. I ought to shut myself up for two or three years, drink water, eat vegetables like Protogenes, go to bed at six o'clock, get up at midnight and work till morning, employ the day in reviewing, expanding, pruning, improving, polishing the work of the night; correcting proofs, taking notes, making the necessary studies, and, above all, living in the most absolute chastity. He insisted much on this last recommendation, rather rigorous for a young man of twenty-five. According to his ideas true chastity developed to the highest degree the powers of the mind, and gave to those who practised it mysterious faculties. When I timidly remarked that the greatest geniuses had not deprived themselves of love, of passion, nor even of pleasure, and cited a few illustrious names, Balzac shook his head and answered: 'They would have done greater things without them.'

"It must not be thought that he was jesting in prescribing these rules, which even a Trappist would have thought strict. He was perfectly convinced of their efficacy, and spoke with such eloquence that I did, on several occasions, conscientiously try this method of obtaining genius; I got up at midnight, took the inspiring coffee (made after a special formula), and sat down at my writing-table, — on which sleep made no delay in dropping my head. 'La Morte Amoureuse' was my only nocturnal production.

"With his profound instinct for reality, Balzac perceived that the modern life he wished to paint was governed by one mighty fact, — Money. Assuredly no man was ever less avaricious than he, but his genius

made him foresee the immense part about to be played by that metallic hero, more interesting to modern society than the Grandisons, the Des Grieux, the Werthers, Laras, Renés, and Quentin Durwards. At the period when the first novels signed by his name appeared, the world had not, in the same degree that it has to-day, the absorbing interest, or I might better call it, the fever, of gold. California was not discovered; a few miles of railway were all that existed, and no one suspected their future; they were looked upon as a new species of *montagne russe*, then fallen into disuse; the general public were ignorant of what we now call 'business;' bankers alone gambled at the Bourse. The movement of capital, the glitter of gold, the calculations, the figures, in short, the importance given to money in novels, hitherto taken for mere romantic fictions and not for serious pictures of life, astonished the subscribers of the circulating libraries, and the critics set to work to add up the sum total expended or brought into action by the author. The millions of old Grandet were discussed arithmetically; and sober-minded men, excited by the enormity of the totals, threw doubts on Balzac's financial ability, — an ability which was, however, really great, and so admitted, later. Stendhal says, with disdainful foppishness of manner, 'Before sitting down to write I always read three or four pages of the Code civil to tone me up.' Balzac, who knew so much of money, found poems and dramas in the Code. The bankruptcy in *César Birotteau* stirs us like the history of the fall of an empire. The struggle between the château and the cottage in *Les Paysans* presents as many vicissitudes as the siege of Troy.

But these new elements introduced into a novel did not please at first. Philosophical analysis, elaborate pictures of character, descriptions, of a minuteness which seemed to have in view a distant future, were thought of grievous length, and more often skipped to follow the story. Later, it was seen that the author's purpose was not to weave the intrigues of a complicated tale, but to paint society as a whole, from summit to base, with its living beings and its inanimate things. Then it was that people began to admire the immense variety of his types. I think it is Alexandre Dumas who calls Shakspeare 'the greatest creator after God.' The words might be applied, with even more justice, to Balzac; for never, in truth, did such a number of living beings issue from any other human brain.

"About the year 1836 Balzac conceived the plan of his *Comédie Humaine*, and attained to a full consciousness of his genius. He then attached the works already written to his general idea, and gave them their place in the philosophical categories he had marked out. Some novels of pure fancy did not fit in very well. in spite of the hooks afterwards attached to them; but these were mere details, lost in the immensity of the whole, like the ornaments of another style in a noble edifice.

"I have said that Balzac worked laboriously, and, stubborn founder that he was, returned the metal to the pot a dozen times if it did not completely fill the mould. Like Palissy, he would have burned the furniture, the floors, even the beams of his house to keep up the fire of his furnace, and forego no experiment. The severest necessities never induced him to deliver a work

on which he had not spent his last effort; he gave many admirable examples of this literary conscientiousness. When, sitting before his table in his monkish robe in the silence of the night, with the white sheets lying before him, on which fell the light of seven candles, which he always used concentrated by a green shade, he forgot all, and then began a struggle greater than that of Jacob with the angel, that of form and idea. In the morning, when he issued from that battle, wearied but not vanquished, the fire being out and the atmosphere of the room chilly, his head smoked and his body exhaled a sort of mist like that we see from a horse in winter. Sometimes a single sentence would occupy a whole night. It would be made and remade, twisted, kneaded, hammered, lengthened, shortened, written in a dozen different ways, and, singular to relate, the proper form, the absolutely best, did not present itself until after all approximative forms had been exhausted. No doubt the metal did often flow with a fuller and freer current, but there are very few pages in Balzac which are identical with the first copy.

"His method of proceeding was as follows: When he had long borne and lived a subject, he wrote, in a rapid, uneven, blotted, almost hieroglyphic writing, a species of outline on several pages. These pages went to the printing-office, from which they were returned in placards; that is to say, in detached columns in the centre of large sheets. He read these proofs attentively; for they already gave to his embryo work that impersonal character which manuscript never possesses; and he applied to this first sketch the great critical faculty with which he was gifted, precisely as

though he were judging of another man's work. Then he began operations; approving or disapproving he maintained or corrected, but, above all, he *added.* Lines started from the beginning, middle, or end of sentences, and made their way to the margins on the right or left or top or bottom, leading to amplifications, insertions, deletions, epithets, and adverbs. After some hours' work the paper might have been taken for a drawing of fireworks by a child. Rockets, darting from the original text, exploded on all sides. Then there were crosses, simple crosses, crosses re-crossed like those of a blazon, stars, suns, Arabic figures, letters, Greek, Roman, or French, all imaginable signs mingled with erasures. Strips of paper, fastened on by wafers or pins, were added to the insufficient margins, and were rayed with lines of writing, very fine to save room, and full themselves of erasures; for a correction was hardly made before that again was corrected. By this time the original proof had almost disappeared in the midst of this apparently cabalistic scribble, which the compositors passed from hand to hand, each unwilling to do more than one hour of Balzac.

"The following day the proofs came back, all corrections made, and the bulk of course doubled. Balzac set to work again, — always amplifying; adding here a trait, there a detail, a picture, an observation of manners, a characteristic word, an effective sentence; pressing the idea more and more into the form, and getting always nearer to his inward conception; choosing, like a painter, from three or four outlines the final line. Often this tremendous labor ended with an intensity of attention, a clearness of perception of which

he alone was capable. He would see that the thought was warped by the execution; that an episode predominated; that a figure which he meant should be secondary, for the general effect, was projecting out of his plan. Then with one stroke of his pen he bravely annihilated the result of four or five nights of labor. He was heroic at such times.

"I have seen at Les Jardies, on the shelves of a bookcase which contained only his own works, each different proof of the same book bound in a separate volume, from the first placard to the finished volume; and the comparison of Balzac's thought in its various stages was a curious study and contained many useful literary lessons. Near to these volumes, by the bye, was a shabby old book of unpleasant appearance, bound in black morocco without punches or gilding, which attracted my attention. 'Take it down,' said Balzac, 'it is an unpublished work of mine, and has its value.' It bore the title *Comptes Mélancholiques*, and contained a list of all his debts, the dates at which his notes fell due, the bills of his tradesmen, and the whole array of threatening documents which the Stamp legalizes. This volume, as if in derisive contrast, stood side by side with the *Contes Drolatiques*, 'to which they are not the sequel,' said Balzac, laughing.

"In spite of this laborious manner of working, Balzac produced a great deal, — thanks to his superhuman will assisted by the temperament of an athlete and the seclusion of a monk. When he had some important work on hand he would write sixteen or eighteen hours out of the twenty-four for two or three consecutive months; he granted to his animality only six hours' sleep, which

was heavy, feverish, and convulsive from the torpor of digestion caused by his hasty meals. At such times he disappeared completely; even his best friends lost trace of him. Then he would reappear as if from under ground, flourishing his work over his head, laughing his hearty laugh, applauding himself with perfect naïveté, and bestowing on his work the praises he asked of none. No author was ever so indifferent to articles and criticisms on his books. He left his reputation to make itself without raising a finger to help it, and never did he court the journalists.

"Sometimes he would come to my rooms of a morning, breathless, tired-out, giddy with the fresh air, like Vulcan escaping from his forge, and fling himself on the sofa. His long night's work had made him hungry, and he would pound up sardines and butter, making a sort of pomade of them which reminded him of the *rillettes* of Tours, and spreading it on bread. It was his favorite food; and he had no sooner eaten it than he fell asleep, telling me to wake him at the end of an hour. I paid no attention to this request; on the contrary, I stopped the noises of the house to prolong that well-earned sleep. When Balzac woke of himself and saw the twilight gathering its gray tints upon the sky, he bounded up, called me a traitor, thief, assassin; I had made him lose ten thousand francs; if he had been awakened he should have followed out the thread of a story which would have brought him in at least that sum, — without counting reprints; I had made him miss rendezvous with bankers, editors, duchesses; he should be too late to take up a note; that fatal sleep might cost him millions. But I was well accustomed

to his hyperboles, and consoled myself readily when I saw how the fine Tourainean color had come back to his rested face.

"The great Goethe held three things in horror, one of which was tobacco-smoke. Balzac, like the Jupiter of the German Olympus, could not endure tobacco under any form; he anathematized a pipe and proscribed cigars; he would not even allow of the smallest Spanish *papelito*; the Oriental narghile alone found favor in his sight, and then only as a curious *bibelot* possessing local color. His philippics against Nicot's herb were not like those of a certain doctor who, during a dissertation on the horrors of tobacco, took plentiful pinches from a snuff-box beside him. Balzac never smoked. His *Traité des Excitants* contains an indictment in form against tobacco, and there is no doubt that if he had been sultan, like Amurath, he would have cut off the heads of relapsed or refractory smokers. He reserved all his excesses for coffee, which did him so much harm and perhaps killed him, though he was organized for a centenarian.[1]

"In 1839 Balzac was living at Chaillot in the rue des Batailles, a house from which he had a fine view of the course of the Seine, the Champs de Mars, the École Militaire, the dome of the Invalides, a large part of Paris, and the slopes of Meudon. He had surrounded himself with some luxury knowing that in Paris no one believes in poverty-stricken talent, and that a well-to-

[1] We may add to these personal traits that he never carried money or a watch. Sometimes this brought him into difficulties. He would walk into Paris from Les Jardies and have no means of paying his fare back, or getting a dinner.

do appearance often leads to doing well. To this period belong his passing fancy for dandyism and elegance, the famous blue coat and gilt buttons, the cane with the turquoise knob, the appearance at the Bouffes and the Opera, and his more frequent visits in society, where his sparkling wit and animation made him welcome, — useful visits, moreover, for they gave him more than one model. It was not easy to make one's way into his house, which was guarded like the garden of the Hesperides. Two or three passwords were necessary, which were changed frequently, for fear they should become known. I remember a few. To the porter we said, 'The plum season has come,' on which he allowed us to cross the threshold. To the servant who rushed to the staircase when the bell rang it was necessary to murmur, 'I bring some Brussels lace;' and if you assured him that 'Madame Bertrand was quite well,' you were admitted forthwith. This nonsense amused Balzac immensely; and it was perhaps necessary, to keep out bores, and other visitors still more disagreeable.

"One of Balzac's dreams was of friendship, — heroic, devoted friendship; two souls, two valors, two intellects blended in one will. That of Pierre and Jaffier in Otway's 'Venice Preserved' had always struck him and he often talked of it. His *Histoire des Treize* is this idea enlarged and complicated, — a powerful unity, composed of several persons, all acting blindly for one agreed end. Real life and intellectual life were never as defined and separate in Balzac as in other authors, and his creations often followed him from his study. He wished to form an association in the style of that

which united Ferragus, Montriveau, Ronquerolles, and their companions; only there was no question of their bold strokes, — the actual plan confining itself to something much simpler, as follows: A certain number of friends were to stand by each other on all occasions; they were to work according to their capacity for the success or the fortunes of whichever one of them might be designated, — with return of service, of course. Much delighted with his scheme, Balzac recruited auxiliaries, whom he brought into relations with each other with as many precautions as though the matter concerned a political society or a branch of the Carbonari. When the number was complete he assembled the adepts and explained the object of the society. Needless to say that all declared their satisfaction without discussion, and the statutes were voted with enthusiasm. No one possessed the gift of stirring, super-exciting, intoxicating even the coolest heads and the sedatest minds like Balzac. He had an overflowing, tumultuous, seductive eloquence that carried you off your feet whether you would or no; no objections were possible against him; he would drown them in such a deluge of words that you had to be silent. Besides, he had an answer for everything, and he would fling you a glance, so flashing, so illuminated, so charged with electric fluid that he infused his desires into your mind.

"The association, which counted among its members Granier de Cassagnac, Léon Gozlan, Louis Desnoyers, Jules Sandeau, Merle (known as the handsome Merle), myself, and some others whom it is useless to name, was called *Le Cheval Rouge* [the Red Horse]. Why the Red Horse, you will ask me, any more than the

Golden Lion or the Maltese Cross? The first meeting of the associates took place at a restaurant, on the quai de l'Entrepôt, at end of the pont de la Tournelle, the sign of which was a quadruped *rubricâ pictus;* and this had given Balzac the idea of the name, which seemed sufficiently queer, unintelligible, and cabalistic.

"When it was necessary to discuss some project Balzac, elected by acclamation grand master of the Order, sent a faithful messenger to each *horse* (the slang appellation the members went by among themselves) with a letter, in which was drawn a small red horse, and the words 'Stable, such a day, such a place.' In society, though we all knew each other (most of us for half our lifetimes), we were to avoid speaking, or else meet coldly, to escape all suspicion of connivance. Sometimes in a salon Balzac would pretend to meet me for the first time, and then, with winks and grimaces such as actors use for their asides, he would seem to be saying: 'See how well I play my part.'

"What was the object of the Cheval Rouge? Was it organized to change the government, establish a new religion, found a school of philosophy, rule men, seduce women? Very much less than that. We were to get possession of newspapers, invade the theatres, seat ourselves in the armchairs of the Academy, win a string of decorations, and wind up modestly as peers of France, ministers, and millionnaires. All that was easy — according to Balzac; it was only necessary to have a perfect mutual understanding; such commonplace ambitions ought to prove to us the moderation of our characters.

"I smile to myself as I here betray, after so many years, the secret of this literary free-masonry, — which had no result whatever. But, at the time, we took the thing seriously; we imagined we were the *Treize* themselves, and felt surprised that we could not pass through barriers as they did; but the world is so ill-contrived! After four or five meetings the *Cheval Rouge* ceased to exist, most of the horses being unable to pay for their oats in the symbolic manger; and the association, organized to obtain all things, was dissolved because the members often lacked fifteen francs, the cost of the reckoning. Each therefore plunged back alone into the battle of life, fighting with his own weapons; and this explains why it was that Balzac never belonged to the Academy, and died a *chevalier* only of the Legion of honor.

"The idea, nevertheless, was a good one. Others, who adopted it, put it in practice without the same romantic phantasmagoria, and succeeded.

"I am writing my recollections of Balzac just as they come to me, without attempting to give connection to that which cannot be connected. Moreover, as Boileau has told us, 'transitions are the great difficulty of poetry,' and, I may add, of essays, — but modern journalists have not the conscience, nor the leisure, of the Parnassian legislator.

"Madame de Girardin was one of the women who professed a great admiration for Balzac; he was fully alive to it, and showed his gratitude by frequent visits, — he so chary, and rightly too, of his time and his hours of labor. No woman ever possessed in a greater degree than Delphine, as we allowed ourselves

to call her familiarly among ourselves, the art of bringing out the qualities of her guests. With her they were always at their best, and they left her salon astonished at themselves. No pebble so unpolished but what she could strike a spark from it, and on Balzac, as you may well believe, there was no need to strike the flint long; he sparkled instantly, and flamed up. Balzac was not precisely a conversationalist, quick in reply, flinging a keen or decisive word into the discussion, changing the subject imperceptibly as the talk flowed on, touching all things with a light hand, and never exceeding a quiet half-smile. On the contrary, he was full of animation, eloquence, and an irresistible *brio;* and, as every one stopped talking to listen to him, conversation in his presence was apt to degenerate into soliloquy. The point of departure was soon forgotten, — he passed from anecdote to philosophical reflection, from social observations to local descriptions; and as he spoke his cheeks would color, his eyes became strangely luminous, his voice took many inflections, and sometimes he would burst out laughing at the droll apparitions which he *saw* before he spoke of them. At the least provocation his natural gayety broke forth, swelling his strong chest; it sometimes disturbed the squeamish, but they were all forced to share it, no matter what efforts they made to keep their gravity. Do not think, however, that Balzac ever sought to amuse the gallery; he simply yielded to a sort of inward intoxication, — sketching with rapid strokes and with comic intensity and incomparable drollery the fantastic images that were dancing in the dark chambers of his brain. At the time when he was writing *Un Début dans la vie* he wanted proverbs for

his *rapin* Mistigris, and Madame de Girardin, on the other hand, was also in search of sayings for the famous lady with the seven little chairs in the 'Courrier de Paris.' My help was occasionally called in; and if a stranger had entered the room and seen Delphine, with her white fingers thrust through the meshes of her golden hair, profoundly thinking, and Balzac sitting on the arm of a big chair (in which Émile de Girardin was usually asleep), his hands at the bottom of his trousers pockets, his waistcoat rubbed up over his stomach, one foot dangling with rhythmic motion, his face expressing by its contracted muscles some extraordinary struggle of the mind, and me, curled up among the cushions of the sofa like an hallucinated theriaki, — this stranger, I say, would never have suspected what we were about; he would have thought that Balzac was dreaming of another *Lys*, Madame de Girardin of a rôle for Rachel, and I of some sonnet. Ah, the good evenings which can never come again! Who would then have believed that grand and superb woman, carved in antique marble, that sturdy, robust, apparently long-lived man, who had within him the vigor of a wild boar and a bull, half Hercules, half faun, and was framed to see a hundred years, would soon be laid to sleep, one at Montmartre, the other in Père-Lachaise, and I should alone remain to record these memories already so far away, and about to perish forever unless I write them down?

"Balzac had the makings of a great actor in him. He possessed a full, sonorous, resonant voice, which he knew how to moderate and render soft at will, and he read admirably, — a talent lacking to most actors. When he related anything he played it, with intonations, facial

expressions, and gestures which no comedian ever excelled, as I think. On one occasion, at Les Jardies, he read us *Mercadet*, — the original *Mercadet*, fuller and more complicated than the play afterwards arranged for the Gymnase, with tact and ability, by d'Ennery. Balzac, who read like Tieck, without indicating either acts or scenes or names, assumed a special voice perfectly recognizable for each personage. The organs with which he endowed the various creditors were of spleen-dispelling comedy; they were of all kinds, hoarse, honied, hurried, drawling, threatening, plaintive. This one yelped, that one mewed, others growled and grumbled and howled, in tones possible and impossible. In the first place, Debt chanted a solo, presently sustained by a vast chorus of creditors; they came from everywhere, — from behind the stove, from under the bed, from the drawers of the bureau; the flue of the chimney vomited them; they squeezed through the key-hole; some scaled the window like lovers; others sprang, like a jack-in-the-box, from a trunk, — 't was a mob, an uproar, an invasion, a tidal wave. In vain Mercadet tried to shake them off, others came to the assault, and far on the horizon dark swarms of creditors were suggested, like legions of ants making for their prey. I don't know whether the play were better so, but no representation of it ever had the same effect upon me.

"During this reading of *Mercadet* Balzac, who had sprained his ankle by slipping on his steep property, lay on a sofa in the salon of Les Jardies. Some sharp thing passing through the covering pricked his leg, and annoyed him. Picking it out, he said, 'The chintz is too thin, the *hay* comes through.' François, the Caleb

of this Ravenswood, not liking any jest on the splendors of the manor, corrected his master and said 'the horse-hair.' 'Then that upholsterer has cheated me!' cried Balzac; 'I particularly told him to put hay. Damned thief!'

"The splendors of Les Jardies, however, existed only in dreams. All Balzac's friends remember how they assisted in decorating the walls (left in the bare plaster or covered with gray paper) by writing thereon, 'Rosewood panels,' 'Gobelin tapestries,' 'Venetian mirror,' 'Picture by Raphael.' Gérard de Nerval had already decorated an apartment in the same way. As for Balzac, he really imagined it was all gold and marble and silk, — but, though he never furnished Les Jardies, and though he did sometimes make his friends laugh with his chimeras, he has built himself an eternal dwelling, a monument more durable than bronze or marble, a vast city, peopled with his creations and gilded with his glory.

"No one can pretend to write a complete biography of Balzac. All relations with him were broken into from time to time by gaps, absences, disappearances. Work ruled his life; and he had, with a very kind and tender heart, the selfishness of a hard worker. Who would have dreamed of being angry with him for negligence or apparent forgetfulness after seeing the results of his flights and seclusions? When, the work accomplished, he reappeared, you would have thought he had parted from you the night before; he took up the interrupted conversation as though six months had not elapsed. He travelled much in France to study the localities where he placed his provincial and his country scenes;

and he stayed with friends in Touraine or La Charente, where he found a peace his creditors did not always let him have in Paris. Occasionally, after some great work was finished, he allowed himself a longer excursion, to Germany, Northern Italy, or Switzerland; but such journeys rapidly made, with anxieties about notes falling due, work to deliver, and a limited viaticum, often harassed him more than they rested him.

"Contrary to the habit of many illustrious literary men who are fed by their own genius, Balzac read a great deal and very rapidly. He loved books, and had collected a fine library which he meant to bequeath to his native town, until the indifference of his compatriots towards him made him relinquish the idea. He absorbed in short time the voluminous works of Swedenborg belonging to his mother, who was occupied in studying mysticism at one period. To this we owe *Séraphita*, one of the most wonderful productions of modern literature. Never did Balzac approach — never did he clasp ideal beauty so closely as in this book. The ascent of the mountain has indeed something ethereal, supernatural, luminous, which lifts you above this earth. The only colors he employs are the blue of the heavens and the white of the snow, with pearly tones for shadows. I know nothing more entrancing than that opening. The panorama of Norway with "its serrated edges like a granite lace" seen from those heights, dazzles me and gives me vertigo. *Louis Lambert* shows the same influences; but soon Balzac, who had taken wings from the mystics to soar into the infinite, returned to this earth on which we dwell; though his strong lungs were able to breathe the

subtile air which is death to feebler beings. After these flights he returned from that upper-world to our lower life; perhaps his noble genius would too quickly have passed from sight had he continued to rise to the immeasurable immensities of the science of mind, and we ought to consider it a fortunate thing that *Louis Lambert* and *Séraphita* were the only doors he opened into the world invisible.

"As years went on his hard life of nocturnal work did, in spite of his strong constitution, leave certain traces on Balzac's face; and I find in *Albert Savarus* a portrait of him, drawn by his own hand, which describes him as he was in 1842, with slight modifications, — fewer kilograms of weight, for instance, as became the man beloved by the Duchesse d'Argaiolo and Mademoiselle de Watteville. This story, one of the least known and least quoted of all his books, contains many details on his habits of life and work; one might even find, if it were allowable to lift the veil, confidences of another nature.

"Balzac, who has painted women so marvellously, must have known them well. In one of his letters to his sister, written when he was quite young and completely unknown, he reveals the ideal of his life in two words, 'to be famous and to be loved.' The first, which all other artists seek, was realized from point to point. Did the second meet with its fulfilment? In the opinion of those who were most intimate with him he practised the chastity he recommended to others. During our intimacy, which lasted from 1836 until his death, only once did Balzac make allusion, in the tenderest and most respectful terms, to an attachment of

his early youth; and even then he only told me the first name of the woman whose memory, after so many years, brought the moisture to his eyes. But, had he told me more than he did, I would certainly not abuse his confidence; the genius of a great writer belongs to the world, but his heart is his own. I pass lightly over this tender and delicate side of Balzac's life, — all the more that I have nothing to say of it that does not do him honor. His reserve and silence were those of an honorable man. If he was loved as he desired in his dreams, the world has known nothing of it.

"Do not imagine after this that Balzac was austere or prudish in language; the author of the *Contes Drolatiques* was too imbued with Rabelais, too pantagruelist himself not to have his merriment; he knew good stories, and could invent them; his indecorous jollity, interlarded with Gallic plain-speaking, would have frightened the canting, and made them cry out, 'Shocking!' But those laughing, loquacious lips were silent as the grave where serious feelings were concerned. Scarcely did he allow his nearest and dearest to guess at his love for a foreigner of distinction, — a love which I may speak of here because it was crowned by marriage. It was this passion, dating back a long while, which explained his distant journeys, the object of which was a mystery to his friends until almost the last of his life.

"About the year 1844 it was that Balzac first began to show a taste for old furniture, chests, pottery, and Chinese vases. The smallest bit of worm-eaten wood which he bought in the rue de Lappe always had some illustrious beginning; and he made out circumstantial

genealogies for all his *bibelots*. He concealed them here and there, on account, he said, of his creditors, in whose reality I was beginning by this time to lose faith. I even amused myself by spreading a report that Balzac had become a millionnaire, and that he bought old stockings of the ragman in which to keep his ounces, doubloons, Genoese gold-pieces, and double-louis, after the manner of Père Grandet. I told everywhere of his three vats, like those of Aboulcasem, filled to the brim with carbuncles and dinars and omans. 'Théo will get my throat cut with his nonsense!' said Balzac, provoked and delighted.

"What gave some color to my joke was the new residence which Balzac had lately bought in the rue Fortunée, quartier Beaujon, then less populated than it is now. Here he occupied a mysterious little house which sheltered the new fancies of my sumptuous financier. When you made your way into this retreat, which was not at all easy, for the master of the house denied himself to visitors, you beheld a vast number of luxurious and comfortable details much in contradiction to the poverty he affected. He admitted me one day, and showed me first a dining-room, panelled in old oak, with table, mantelpiece, buffets, shelves, and chairs in carved wood, fit to rouse the envy of Berruguete, Cornejo Duque, or Verbruggen; then a salon in gold damask, with doors, cornices, plinths and window-casings in ebony; a library, with ranges of shelves inlaid with tortoise-shell and copper in the style of Boulle; a bath-room done in black and yellow marble, and finished in stucco; a dome-roofed boudoir full of old pictures restored by Edmond Hédouin; and a gallery lighted

from above, which I recognized later in *Cousin Pons*. All sorts of curiosities were on the étagères; Dresden and Sèvres porcelains, and specimens of pale-green crackle. On the staircase, which was covered by a carpet, were tall Chinese vases and a magnificent lantern suspended by a red-silk cord.

"'You certainly *have* emptied one of Aboulcasem's vats!' I said, laughing. 'You see I was right in calling you a millionnaire.'

"'I am as poor as ever,' he replied, with a deprecating air; 'nothing of all this is mine. I have furnished the house for a friend whom I am expecting. I am only the porter of the hotel.'

"I quote his actual words. He made the same answer to other persons, who were as much puzzled as I was by it. The mystery was soon after explained by his marriage with a lady whom he had long loved.

. . . . . .

"Posterity has begun for Balzac; every day his fame grows greater. When he mingled with his contemporaries he was ill-appreciated; he was seen only by fragments and under aspects that were often unfavorable. Now, the edifice that he built rises higher and higher as we recede from it — like the cathedral of some town, hidden at its base by clustering houses, but seen on the horizon in all its vastness above the diminished roofs. The building is not completed; but such as it is, it awes us by its immensity, and future generations will ask who was the giant who raised those mighty blocks and constructed that Babel in which a whole society is humming."

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS SISTER'S NARRATIVE CONCLUDED.

I AM obliged, though unwillingly, to speak of a lawsuit which my brother was compelled to institute in 1836 against the "Revue de Paris," in relation to *Le Lys dans la Vallée*. Not that I wish to revive enmities, God forbid! but this suit affected his life too seriously to allow me to pass it over in silence; it reduced him, for a time, to the distress and anxiety of his first literary years just as he was about to triumph over them, by depriving him of the support of reviews and newspapers, and by exciting much malevolence against him.

The facts were these: While *Le Lys dans la Vallée* was in course of publication in the "Revue de Paris," friends in St. Petersburg informed my brother that the work was being published in full in that city, though less than half had been issued in Paris. Supposing that this was done without the knowledge of the editor, Honoré hastened to inform him of the injury to their mutual interests. He then discovered that the editor himself, believing no doubt that he acted within his rights, was directing the publication in Russia. My brother objected; the editor became angry, and would not listen to any amicable arrangement. Honoré then

told him that he should take the case to the courts and ask for a legal decision on the rights of authors. He would not allow such a wrong to pass, for it might be made a precedent in future years as much to the injury of his brother-writers as to his own.

To bring such a suit as this was daring a great deal; for whether won or lost it was certain to have fatal consequences to Honoré independently of the question of money, which was so important to him; for no one could doubt that the "Revue" would close its columns to him and become his enemy. Such considerations, however, could not stop him, and he brought the suit. What was his amazement when his antagonist appeared in court armed with certificates of good repute and *literary honor*, signed by nearly all his brother writers, whose interests as well as his own he was endeavoring to defend at his personal risk and peril. Honoré was deeply hurt at what he thought disloyalty. For a long time he divided his fellow-authors into two camps: those who had signed and those who refrained from signing. And when his anger was over the want of logical common-sense in the former still provoked him.

His rights were evident, however; he won the case, and with it a great many enemies.

This lawsuit, together with the book entitled *Illusions perdues*, in which he has drawn a picture of the feuilletonists, exasperated the press against him; and, so bitter are literary hatreds, even his death has not disarmed them all. He troubled himself very little about such attacks, and he often brought us the papers or periodicals in which the worst appeared, and read us the articles.

"Just see what a state of mind those fellows are in," he would say. "Fire away, my dear enemies, the armor is proof: it saves advertising; your praises would leave the public indifferent, but your insults will wake them up. Don't they howl! If I were rich, people might say I paid them. However, we must n't say a word; if they get the idea they are doing me good they are capable of holding their tongues."

We thought otherwise, and the attacks troubled us.

"How silly you are to take them to heart," he would say. "Can critics make my work good or bad? let time, the great umpire, show; if these fellows are wrong the public will see it some day or other, and injustice then becomes a benefit to those it has injured. Besides, these guerillas of art hit true sometimes; and by correcting the faults they point out my work is improved, — in fact, I really owe them some gratitude."

Therefore he would make neither remonstrance nor explanations. Once only he broke the rule of silence he had laid down for himself by writing the *Monographie de la presse.* This work, sparkling with wit in every line, was wrung from him by his friends; they accused him of weakness, almost of cowardice; he showed his claws to oblige them; but he afterwards regretted the work, which wronged, he thought, his character if not his talent.

The fatal consequences of this struggle with the "Revue de Paris" are told in the following letter, written from the rue des Batailles, at Chaillot, where he lived after leaving the rue Cassini, and before he inhabited Les Jardies: —

"Your husband and Sophie came yesterday, and ate a horrible dinner in my bachelor's den at Chaillot; it was the more unseemly because the kind brother had been running about all day on my account.

"I have just concluded a good arrangement with the 'Estafette.' The other journals will come back to me some day; they need me. Besides, have they taken my brain-fields from me, or my literary vineyards, or the woods of intellect? are there not other publishers to fall back on? Some publishers, not understanding their real interests (that is incredible to you, is n't it?), prefer books which have not appeared in a periodical. This is not the time to enlighten them; though it is quite clear that a previous publication saves them the cost of advertising, and that the more a book is known the better it will sell.

"Don't fret therefore; there is no danger as yet in the domicile; I am tired, it is true, even ill, but I have just accepted Monsieur de Margonne's invitation to spend two months at Saché, where I shall rest and take care of myself. I shall attempt something dramatic, while I finish *Père Goriot* and correct *La Récherche de l'Absolu.* I shall begin with *Marie Touchet;* it will make a strong piece in which I can bring strong characters on the stage.

"I will not sit up so late; don't worry too much about that. Let us be just; if troubles have given me a liver-complaint I have come honestly by it. But halt there, Mistress Death; if you do come, let it be to shift my burden, for I have not yet accomplished my task! Don't therefore worry yourself too much, Laure; the sky will come blue again.

"The *Médecin de Campagne* is being reprinted; it was out of print; that's nice, is n't it?

"The widow Bechet[1] has been sublime; she has taken upon herself four thousand francs for proof corrections, which really belonged to me; that's nice, too, is n't it?

"Rely upon it, if God grants me life, I shall have a noble place in the future, and we shall all be happy. Let us be merry, my good sister; the house of Balzac shall triumph! Shout it aloud with me, very loud, that Dame Fortune may hear us, and for God's sake don't fret."

The letter which follows shows him in one of those moments of discouragement which no artists, however vigorous in mind they may be, can entirely escape.

"I am so sad to-day that there must be some sympathetic cause for such sadness. Can it be that some one I love is suffering? Is my mother ill? Where is my good Surville? is he well, body and soul? Have you news of Henry, and is it good? You and your little ones, can it be that any of you are ill? Write me at once and ease my mind.

"My dramatic attempts are doing badly. I shall give them up for the present. Historical drama requires great scenic effects, which I know nothing about, and which, perhaps, I could only find out in a theatre with intelligent actors. As for comedy, Molière, whom I wish to follow, is a disheartening master; it takes days upon days to attain to anything good of that kind, and time is always lacking to me. There are,

[1] His new publisher.

besides, such innumerable difficulties to conquer before I can handle even one scene; and I have not the time to give to tentatives. A masterpiece alone, together with my name, would open the doors of a theatre to me, and I have not attained to masterpieces. Not being willing to risk my reputation, I should have to find an intermediary — more time lost, and the worst of it all is I have not any time to lose. I regret giving up the stage; dramatic work is more productive than books, and would sooner bring me out of my trials. But hardships and I took each other's measure long ago; I have conquered them in the past and I will conquer them again. If I succumb, it is because Heaven wills it, and not I.

"The painful impression my distresses make upon you ought to prevent me from telling you of them; but how can I help relieving my over-full heart by pouring it out to yours? Yet it is wrong to do so. It takes a more robust organization than you women have to bear the tortures of a writer's life.

"I work harder than I ought to, but how can I help it? When at work I forget my troubles, and it is that which saves me; but you, you forget nothing. There are persons who are offended by this faculty, and they add to my sufferings by not comprehending me.

"I ought to insure my life, to leave, in case of death, a little fortune to my mother. All debts paid can I meet the costs? I must see about this on my return.

"The time during which the inspiration of coffee lasts is lessening. It now excites my brain for only fifteen days consecutively, — fatal excitement, too, for it gives me horrible pains in the stomach. That is the same time that Rossini assigns to its stimulus.

"Laure, if I wear out every one about me I shall not be surprised. An author's life is never otherwise; but to-day I have the consciousness of what I am and what I shall be. What strength it needs to keep one's head sound when the heart suffers thus. To work night and day, and see myself constantly attacked when I need the tranquillity of a cloister to do my work! When shall I have that peace? Shall I ever have it for a single day? only in the grave, perhaps. They will do me justice there; I like to think so. My best inspirations have ever come to me in moments of extreme anguish; they will shine upon me still —

"I stop; I am too sad; heaven should have given a happier brother to so affectionate a sister.

My brother was then overwhelmed by a great heart-sorrow.[1] I cannot publish any parts of his correspondence except that which relates to himself and his books, or shows him under the aspect of son and brother. These restrictions deprive the public of many interesting pages, especially those which he wrote me after the death of a person very dear to him. I have never read anything so eloquent as the expression of that grief.

A friend allows me to print the following letters, by which the reader can judge of my brother in his friendships: —

"My dear Dablin,[2] — Here is the corrected manuscript and the proof-sheets of the *Chouans*. As soon

[1] The death of Madame de Berny.

[2] Monsieur Théodore Dablin was a rich ironmonger of the rue Saint-Martin, who had the tastes of an artist and a generous heart. He was one of Balzac's most faithful friends, and often helped him in his early days with advice and also with means.

as I put my name to any of my compositions I destined this one for you. But the chances which rule the fate of books decreed that the *Chouans* should not be reprinted since 1834 until now, though many persons have thought the book better than its reputation. If I were of those who make their mark upon their epoch this dedication might be of value in future years; but neither you nor I know the solution of that enigma. Therefore consider it only as a proof of the friendship which remains in my heart, though you have not cultivated it for many years. Ever yours."

The dedication of the *Chouans* reads thus: "To the first friend, the first work."

"My dear Dablin, — My sister tells me that an expression which escaped me has hurt your feelings. It would be knowing me very little to think me a half-friend. It is nearly eighteen years since that Easter day when, passing through the place Vendôme between you and Monsieur P. le H., close to the column, I (being then very young) felt and said what I could be some day. You said that honors and prosperity changed men's hearts. I answered that nothing could change mine in its affections. That is true; I have been false to none; to-day all those who have been my true friends are on a footing of a perfect equality. If you saw more of me you would know this. I have remained very much of a child in spite of the reputation I have won; only I have the selfishness of a hard worker. Sixteen hours a day given to the construction of a great work, which will one day be gigantic, leaves me little time to dispose of. This deprivation of the pleasures of the heart is the heaviest tax I pay to the

future. As for the pleasures of the world and of life, art has killed them all without one regret from me.

"I think that intellect and feeling make all men equal. Therefore, my friend, never again put into the singular what I say of the masses. I have been four times to your house to see you and you are off I don't know where. If I am unable to soothe your wounded heart in person, this letter will tell you how great my astonishment was when my sister told me I had hurt you.

"Adieu; a long letter like this is a luxury to me. Heartfelt regards, and ever yours."

My brother, going four times to find Monsieur Dablin, who lived at a great distance, to assure him that a rough remark which escaped him in a discussion was said without the slightest personal meaning, was certainly not a lukewarm friend.

The letter which follows was addressed to my friend Mme. Carraud, in answer to one from her on the *Physiologie du Mariage*, which incurred her displeasure.

"The feeling of repulsion which you had on reading the first pages of the book I sent you, is too honorable and too delicate for any mind, even that of the author, to be offended by it. It proves that you do not belong to a world of duplicity and treachery, that you know nothing of a social existence which blasts all things, and that you are worthy of a solitude where man is ever great and noble and pure. It is perhaps unfortunate for the author that you did not overcome that first feeling which naturally seizes an innocent heart at the

hearing of a crime, the picturing of evil in the language of Juvenal, Rabelais, Persius, or any other satirist of the same kind. Had you done so I think you would have been reconciled to the book after reading certain strong lessons, certain vigorous pleas in behalf of *woman's* virtue.

"But I cannot blame you for a repugnance which does you honor. How could I be hurt with you for belonging to your sex? I therefore humbly ask your pardon for the involuntary offence, against which, if you remember, I had warned you; and I beg you to believe that the severe judgment you pronounce upon the book cannot alter the sincerity of the friendship you suffer me to feel for you. . . .

"Forgive me, dear, my jokes about the money earned by writing. They have shocked you; but they were really as boyish as a great deal that I do and say. Do you think money really compensates for my work and health? No, no! If my imagination runs away with me sometimes, I soon come back to the noble and the true; do believe that.

"I am now writing for the 'Journal de l'Europe Littéraire,' where I have a note of five thousand francs to meet. At the time that journal came near failing literary men pledged themselves to help it. It is the last time I will involve myself in that way. I ought not, in order to do good to some, to do wrong to others."

My brother was serious in all his thoughts, and it must not be supposed (as many have imagined) that the learning and the science on which he touches from time to time in his books were lightly studied and then

forgotten. What he knew he did not know superficially; where he was ignorant he naïvely admitted his ignorance; and when he had to treat of certain subjects which he had not studied, he consulted those who specially understood them, and was careful to acknowledge openly the service they had rendered to him. There was pride, perhaps, in such acknowledgments. He was capable of thinking that nothing but lack of time kept him from knowing everything.

His constant desire for money, which has been so often blamed, will be, I think, understood and justified by the circumstances I have related. He wanted money in the first place to pay his debts to all. He who craves it from such a motive deserves, surely, the respect of others. My brother, entering life through misfortunes, struggled bravely against the storm like the Portuguese poet, lifting high above the waves that threatened to engulf him the Work he expected should give him fame. Such circumstances still further magnify that work. It is therefore with a feeling of pride that I have here narrated his misfortunes.

I find a letter of this period which refers to his work. It is dated from La Boulonnière, a little estate near Nemours, where he afterwards placed the scene of his *Ursule Mirouët.*

"*La Fleur des pois* [subsequently called *Le Contrat de mariage*] is finished. I have succeeded, I think, in what I wished to do. The single scene of the signing of the marriage contract shows the future of the couple. You will find in it a touch which I think intensely comic; the struggle between the young and the old notariat. I

have managed to attract attention to a discussion of that act. This book is one of the chief scenes in the series of private life; later, I shall write the *Inventaire après décès*, in which the horrible mingles with the comic. Appraisers ought to know a good deal about human turpitude; I shall make them talk. . . .

"All you write about my purchase of the bit of ground at Ville-d'Avray does not affect it. You don't seem to understand that that piece of real estate is an investment which represents what I owe to my mother; I have not the time to discuss it now; but I will convince you when we meet."

The attacks against my brother increased rather than lessened; the critics, unable to repeat the same things forever, changed their batteries and accused him of immorality. It was the best means in their power of doing him harm, and of alienating the public, who began to be alarmed and to manifest ill-will against the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. His works were forbidden in Spain and in Italy, more especially in Rome. Immorality, which is easy to judge of in actions, is difficult to define in works of art. Are not pictures of vice as instructive on the stage or in books as pictures of virtue? What writer, unless it be Florian or Berquin, has escaped the charge of immorality from contemporary critics? It is the resource of such critics when they have nothing to say on the literary value of works. Molière was their target for his Tartufe, Richardson for his Lovelace, that brilliant and vicious man. What did they not say about the house to which Lovelace takes Clarissa? What outcries followed the Manon Lescaut of Provost!

These accusations were very injurious to my brother; they grieved him deeply, and sometimes they disheartened him.

"Those men persist in ignoring the *ensemble* of my work in order that they may pick the details to pieces," he said. "My blushing critics veil their faces before certain personages in the *Comédie Humaine*, who are, unfortunately, as true as the others and set in strong relief in my vast picture the morals of the present day. There are vices in our time as there were in former times. Do they wish, in behalf of innocence, that I should vow to purity all the two or three thousand personages who figure in the *Comédie Humaine?* I should like to see them in action! I didn't invent the Marneffes, male and female, the Hulots, the Philippe Brideaus whom everybody elbows in our worn-out civilization. I write for men, and not for young girls. But I defy them to cite a single page in which religion or the family is attacked. Such injustice revolts the soul and saddens the heart! What tortures success is made of!" he added, dropping his head in his hands. "But after all, why complain?"

Is it not, in truth, a condition of superiority that such minds shall be tortured? Is not their crown too often of thorns, which the vulgar acclaim ironically, denying their kingship until the day when death gives them immortality? My brother has said somewhere in his works that "Death is the consecration of genius."

It is right, however, to say that if Balzac was often wounded by those who wilfully misrepresented his ideas and his character, and also by those who really did not comprehend him, he sometimes met with triumphs which

avenged him for injustice. One only of these triumphs can I relate here.

One evening, in Vienna, he was entering a concert-room when the whole audience rose to salute the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. As he passed through the crowd on his way out, a young man seized his hand and put it to his lips, saying: "I kiss the hand that wrote *Séraphita!*"

"There was such enthusiasm and conviction in that young face," Honoré said to me, "that the sincerity of this homage went to my heart; they may deny my talent if they choose, but the memory of that student will always comfort me."

The man is doubtless still living; should these words meet his eye he will perhaps be glad to know that he gave a joy to the great writer, a joy which he garnered in his memory.

The letters which I have given will enable the public to judge of the ardor of his mind and the warmth of a heart that no disappointments ever chilled. To read his correspondence makes one giddy; how labors, hopes, and projects succeed each other! what activity of mind! what courage, reborn incessantly! what riches of organization! If sorrows of the heart (which were not lacking to him) or weariness of mind and body caused some discouragements now and then, how he conquered them, recovering immediately his robust energy, and that strength for work which never failed him!

The Balzac of society was no longer the man who had poured out his troubles to his family in his talk and letters. In the world he was amiable, brilliant, and knew so well how to conceal his cares that he

passed for the equal of the prosperous; conscious of his own intellect he willingly took precedence of others. His poverty he proudly concealed, because he did not wish for pity; had he felt himself freer in action, more independent of other men, he would proudly have avowed it. It was through misfortune that Balzac came to have his knowledge of social life. Guided by the genius of observation he roamed the valleys and the heights of the social state; studied, like Lavater, on the faces about him the stigmata which express to the eye all passions and all vices; collected his types in the human bazaar like an antiquary; chose his curiosities, evoked his types in places where they were useful to him; placing them on the first or the second plane according to their value; distributing light and shade with the magic of a great artist who knows the power of contrasts, — in short, he imprinted on each of his creations the names, features, ideas, language, and character that belong to them, and which give them such individuality that amid that teeming crowd not one is confounded with another.

He had a singular theory about names; declaring that invented names did not give life to imaginary beings, whereas those that were actually borne endowed them with vitality. He found those that he took for the personages in the *Comédie Humaine* wherever he walked, and he would come home radiant when he had made some good capture of this kind.

"'Matifat!' 'Cardot!' what delightful names!" he said to me. "I found 'Matifat' rue de la Perle, in the Marais. I see my Matifat! he 'll have the wan face of a cat, and a *little* corpulence; because a Matifat can't

have anything stupendous, you know. And Cardot? that's another matter — he is a little bit of a man, dry as a pebble, lively and jovial."

I can quite comprehend his joy in finding the name of Marcas ; but I suspect him of inventing the " Z."

Knowing the fidelity of certain of his portraits drawn from nature, — for if he took their names from the living he also took their characters, — we were sometimes frightened by the likenesses, and dreaded the fresh enmities we feared he would excite.

" How silly you are ! " he would say, laughing and shrugging those strong shoulders which did truly bear a world. " Do people know themselves? Are there any mirrors that reflect the moral being? If a Van Dyke like myself painted me I should probably bow to myself as if to a stranger."

Sometimes he audaciously read his types to those who had posed for them. His audience would highly approve, and while we were looking on, full of anxiety, and thinking that they could not fail to recognize their portrait, they would say : " How true those characters are ; you must have known Monsieur ——, or Monsieur Such-a-one ; that 's the very image of them, an actual portrait ! "

Side by side with those who were unable to recognize themselves were others absolutely convinced that certain characters in the *Comédie Humaine* were theirs. How many women have believed that they inspired his Henriette ! My brother never drew any of these dear deceived ones from the pleasant error which made them so ardent in his defence. Let this silence be forgiven him, for he had need of such devotion.

No author ever made his plans and combinations so far beforehand, or ever bore them longer in his brain before writing them. He has carried to the grave more than one book fully formed, which he reserved for the days of the maturity of his talent, startled himself at the vast horizons it opened before him.

"I have not yet reached the point of perfection necessary to touch those great subjects," he said.

The *Essai sur les forces humaines*, the *Pathologie de la vie sociale*, the *Histoire des Corps Enseignants*, and the *Monographie de la Vertu*, were the titles of some of these books, the pages of which, alas! remain forever blank.

Those who know literary art, and who study the works of Balzac, no longer accuse him, as they once did, of following mere chance or some aimless purpose. He did occasionally, in obedience to certain necessities of execution, change a few details, but never the plan of a book, always laid down long in advance. No writer ever chained down so rigidly to the rules of work that prodigious fertility and facility with which nature had endowed him.

"One should distrust those gifts," he said; "they sometimes lead to sterile superabundance. Boileau was right; we must continually prune the style, which alone gives permanence to a work."

The love he had for perfection, and his deep respect for his own talent, and for the public, led him to work too much over his style. Excepting a few books written under so happy an inspiration that he scarcely retouched them (such as *La Messe de l'Athée*, *La Grenadière*, *Le Message*, *La Femme Abandonnée*), it was

only after correcting successively eleven or twelve proofs of the same sheet that he gave the "order to print," impatiently awaited by the poor compositors, so wearied by his corrections that they could each do only one page at a time of his writings. While he was thus requiring so many proofs of one sheet, and reducing by a great deal his own profits (for publishers would no longer bear the cost of his corrections) he was accused by his traducers of a mercantile spirit in the printing of his books. The compositors who printed them must have laughed if they heard this. When injustice becomes grotesque there is nothing else to do; and attacks of this kind did not trouble my brother. What annoyed him far more was to hear those who did not understand his work pretend to praise it.

His least labored books — those which won for him early in his career the title of the "most prolific of our novelists" — were those which gave him his reputation. Sheltered by that humble title, which did not imply any great superiority and excited no jealousy, he was able to print his more serious works, for which, without this reputation, he might not have succeeded in getting a publisher. He did not like men to judge him only by those novels and tales the horizons of which were limited. To many persons, specially those of academic tastes, Balzac was only "the father of Eugénie Grandet." That was as far as such persons went with him, and beyond that they allowed him neither capacity nor fame. I do not feel to that book as my brother did; and I do not approve of diminishing the merits of such a literary gem, which has been justly compared to a painting of Mieris, or Gerard Dow; but I do think

that many of his books surpass it in mental depth, if they cannot surpass it in truth and in finish of execution.

The title "most prolific of our novelists," which was useful to him in the beginning, was injurious in some respects, and especially in this, that Balzac remained unknown to men of serious minds, who thought this prolific writer unworthy to occupy even their leisure hours; while, on the other hand, more frivolous persons, who fed upon novels exclusively, skipped as wearisome or digressive, the serious parts of his books, for which the fictitious parts were often only the setting; consequently, many of those who read the *Comédie Humaine* knew no more about it than those who never read it at all.

Thus it was that Balzac did not at first obtain the place to which he has a right on the book-shelves of thinkers, beside Rabelais and Shakspeare and Molière, through his glorious relationship to those great spirits.

Friends and relatives who followed Balzac from the cradle to the grave can say confidently that this man, so clear-sighted, so lucid in thought, was confiding and simple as a child in his amusements, sweet-tempered and gentle even in his darkest days of discouragement, and so amiable in his home that life was good beside him. The man who wrote the *Curé de Village*, *Les Parents pauvres*, and *Les Paysans* was like a schoolboy in the holidays when he took his recreation. He sowed his morning-glories along the garden wall at Passy, watched for their blooming in the morning, admired their colors; went into raptures over the jewelled armor of some insect; rushed through the Bois

de Boulogne to Suresnes (where we were then living) to play a game of boston with his family, among whom he was more of a child than his nieces; laughed at puns, envied the lucky being who had the "gift" of making them, tried to do so himself, and failed, saying regretfully, "No, that does n't make a pun." He used to cite with satisfaction the only two he had ever made, "and not much of a success either," he avowed in all humility, "for I did n't know I was making them" (we even suspected him of embellishing them afterwards). *Proverbes retournés*, which at one time were much the fashion in the studios, occupied him much; he was luckier with them than with the puns; he composed several for his favorite Mistigris (*Début dans la Vie*) and for Madame Crémière in *Ursule Mirouët*. "A wife should be the working caterpillar of the household" gave him as much delight as his finest thoughts. "None of you people would have thought of that!" he said to us.

He composed mottoes for our lotteries, under which we hid the lots, and would rush in quite joyful when he thought he had some good ones.

"An author is good for something," he said quite seriously.

The music-master, Schmucke, and the banker, Nucingen, whom he made to speak German-French, amused him not less than his dear *rapin* Mistigris and Madame Crémière. He laughed the tears into his eyes when he read to us what he made them say in their terrible jargon.

Much has been said, and not without reason, of his excessive self-satisfaction; but it was so frank, and

withal so well justified, that those who knew him preferred it to that false humility which often covers far more pride. How could we help forgiving self-satisfaction in the man who had put his name to the *Médecin de Campagne*, the *Recherche de l'Absolu*, the *Curé du village*, and so many other great works, when the conviction of his talent could alone give him the patience and strength necessary for the creation of such works? It would have been better, no doubt, had he repressed this naïve enthusiasm for himself; but it would have been asking the impossible of a man of his frankness and vivacity of feeling. Moreover, we can see in his letters how swiftly doubts followed his greatest satisfactions; and they were just as sincere as his self-conceit. At such times he would ask anxiously if we thought his works (which were shortening his days) would make him live longer than other men in the minds of his fellows.

But it must not be supposed that his self-love was deaf and could not hear the truth. We might say to him plainly, "Such a thing is bad, in our opinion." He would begin by exclaiming, arguing, abusing us perhaps, and declaring that the particular part thought bad was precisely the best in the book. But if, in spite of his anger, we held firm and maintained our own opinion, this firmness made him reflect; he had not lost a single one of our remarks and observations; he weighed them and he judged them in the solitude of his toilsome nights, and he would come back in the morning to press the hands of the friends who cared for him enough to tell him the truth.

"You were right," or, "You were wrong," he would

say with the same good faith, having as much gratitude in the one case as in the other. And it was such friends whom he really preferred, in spite of his self-conceit. He was the first to laugh at that conceit and to let others laugh, and he was moreover very clever in discovering the value of praise and was never duped by unmeaning flattery. He was simple and confiding, but he could not be a fool.

He admired talent wherever he met it,—equally in his friends as in his enemies, and would defend both against all vulgar attacks which calumniated intellect. How many times he protected, without letting it be known, poor unknown authors whose first works chance had thrown in his way; he would go himself to the editors of reviews and journals to say, "That man has a future." And his opinion carried weight.

An incisive or picturesque phrase sufficed him to present a situation, or the future of a man; and it would be impossible to tell a story better than he, or to talk or read better. In fact, it would not do to let him read his books to you if you wished to judge of the weak spots; he could have made an audience admire the verses of Trissotin.

The egotism for which he has been blamed grew out of his miserable situation and his hard labor. Freed from such pressure he was capable of being helpful to others and devoted; witness the friendships which he retained to the end of his life; and certain young literary aspirants could testify that he gave them, more than once, advice and time, his only property. But he who sacrifices his life to live in the future has the right to withdraw from the demands of society, from all those

little duties which are the life of men of leisure; and because my brother did so withdraw, he does not deserve to be accused of indifference. The letters which I have cited are a reply to this reproach of selfishness, and will enable the reader to judge of his heart. But more than this, he possessed the art of making himself so beloved that in his presence all grievances which, rightly or wrongly, persons had against him were forgotten, and nothing remained but the affection they felt for him. The servants who waited on him have never forgotten him, and yet he was unable to do for them as he wished. From the poor old woman of whom he speaks in *Facino Cane* (she had taken the place of the "unintelligent Myself") — who went every morning to the rue Lesdiguières from the far-off purlieus of the faubourg Saint-Antoine, and who used to go and see him wherever he lived afterwards — to François, the old soldier, who was one of his last retainers, all loved him devotedly; and God knows they had neither leisure nor plenty when they lived with him.

"I don't know what it is about him, but I 'd serve him for nothing," I have heard one of them say. "You don't feel tired or sleepy if he wants you, and if he scolds you in return, it is all right."

As for his friendships, it is quite true, as he wrote to Monsieur Dablin, that he betrayed none and kept them all. Intimate with many of the most remarkable persons of his time, they all took pride in his affection and returned it in kind. More than once he left his work to stay with a sick friend; with him such claims of the heart took precedence of all others. The allurement he felt to the friends he loved was so great that often when

he went to see them for a moment he stayed hours; then came remorse and admonitions: —

"Monster! wretch! you ought to have been making copy instead of talking!" and more time was lost in adding up the number of hours which such pleasures had cost him, — an exorbitant sum, which, beginning with reasonable figures, attained to the fabulous. "For we must reckon the reprints," he said.

To sum up all, this great spirit had the graces and the charm of those who shine by amiability alone. His happy and kindly gayety gave him that serenity of soul which he needed to continue his work; but foolish indeed are those who pretend to judge of Balzac in his hours of exuberance; the child-man once at work became the gravest and most profound of thinkers. George Sand, who knew my brother well, has spoken nobly of him, being mistaken on one point only; namely, the extreme sobriety which she attributes to him. His life was not that of an anchorite. Outside of his work, which took precedence of everything, he loved and enjoyed the pleasures of this world; and I think he might have become the most conceited of men had he not also been the most prudent. He, so outspoken in all that related to himself, never committed any indiscretions in his social relations, and faithfully guarded the secrets of others though he never was able to keep his own.

I find in his letters the following appreciation of George Sand, whom he called his "brother George," doing homage, no doubt, to her virile genius: —

"She has none of the littleness of soul nor any of those base jealousies which cloud so many contempo-

rary talents. Dumas is like her in that respect. George Sand is a very noble friend; and I would consult her with perfect confidence in moments of doubt as to the logical course to take under such or such circumstances. But I think she lacks the critical sense, at any rate loses the first impulsion of it; she allows herself to be too easily persuaded, does not hold firmly enough to her own opinions, or know how to contend against the arguments her adversary brings forward."

My brother used to say, laughingly, in allusion to his want of height, that "great men were nearly always short; probably because the head should be near the heart, so that the two powers which govern the organization should work in harmony."

At home he was always to be seen in a large dressing-gown of white cashmere, lined with white silk, made like the habit of a monk, and fastened round the waist by a silk cord. On his head was the "Dantesque cap" of black velvet, made for him by his mother, which he first took to wearing in his garret, and continued to wear for the rest of his life. According to the hours at which he went out, his dress was slovenly or very neat. If he were met in the morning, wearied with twelve hours' hard work, and rushing to the printers with his hat over his eyes, his beautiful hands hidden in shabby gloves, his feet in shoes with high quarters, that were often outside the loose trousers pleated at the waist and held down with straps, he might have been confounded with the common herd. But if his brow were uncovered, if he looked at a passer-by or spoke to him, the most ordinary of men would remember him. His intellect, constantly exercised, had developed to its highest degree a forehead

naturally vast, the receptacle of many lights! That intellect showed itself also in his first words and even in his gestures. A painter might have studied on that mobile face the expression of all sentiments, — joy, pain, energy, discouragement, irony, hope, or disappointment, — all conditions of the soul were reflected there.

He triumphed over the vulgarity which seems to belong to corpulence by manners and gestures that were full of grace and natural distinction. His hair, the fashion of which he was fond of changing, was always artistic, no matter how he wore it. An immortal chisel has left his features to posterity. The bust which David made of my brother, then forty-four years of age, has faithfully reproduced his noble brow, and that fine hair (the sign of a physical vigor that equalled his moral vigor), the admirable setting of the eyes, the firm lines of his square nose, the mouth with its curved lips, where good-humor and satire met and mingled, and the chin which completed the pure oval of his face before obesity injured its harmony. But marble unhappily could not present those torches of the mind, those brown eyes spangled with gold, like the eyes of a lynx, — eyes which questioned and answered without the help of words, which saw ideas and feelings, and threw out gleams that seemed to issue from an inward source which poured its rays upon the daylight instead of receiving any from it.

Balzac's friends will recognize the truth of these words, which those who never knew him may think exaggerated.

The time may come when I can finish this narrative of my brother's life with an account of his last years.

If so, its details will be accompanied by letters which will show the change that experience so dearly bought had wrought in that vast intelligence. The Balzac of those years had outgrown his effusiveness, and had become prudent, serious, even grave, but always without misanthropy. I may be able to tell of the last days of a life cut down in the vigor of his age and of his genius, before he had completed his work, just as he hoped for happiness and was about to enjoy a tranquillity long-desired, — a grievous fate, which touched the hearts of friends and enemies alike.

Immense successes, great affections, were the joys of his life; he had also supreme afflictions; nothing is diminutive in the soul of him whom God has endowed with exquisite sensibilities and a great mind. Who shall dare to pity or to envy him?

I have revealed his nature; I have shown him in his private life, in his feelings for his family and friends. I have related misfortunes valiantly fought with, courageously borne. I think I have fulfilled my task by making others respect and love the man in the writer whom they admire. Here ends my obligation to him and to all. Strong souls alone can judge him as an author.

CHAPTER IX.

RETROSPECTIVE.

It has been said that women are the keystone of Balzac's work. This is true; but those who have said it show no conception of its real meaning; and it will be instructive to see what they meant by what they said before calling Balzac himself to testify to the sense in which it is true.

Sainte-Beuve and Jules Janin were the chief critics who in Balzac's lifetime attributed his success to women. In his review of *La Recherche de l'Absolu* Sainte-Beuve says: —

"In the first place and from the first, M. de Balzac has put in his interests one half of the public, and a very essential half to win. He has made it his upholder by adroitly flattering certain fibres secretly known to him. 'Woman belongs to M. de Balzac,' says M. Jules Janin; 'she is his, — in full toilette, in dishabille, in the most trifling particulars of her daily life. He dresses her and he undresses her. He is a milliner, or rather, he is a mantua-maker.' And, in truth, what splendid materials he deals in; only they are the worse for wear; spots of grease and oil are on them. M. de Balzac has introduced himself to the sex as a confidant, a consoler, a confessor with a touch of the doctor about him. He knows many things about their sentimental

and their sensual secrets. Like a doctor he enters their bedroom and speaks in a whisper of mysterious details which confuse the modest. A friend of mine suggests that he has the secret arts and sleight of hand of the *accoucheur* or the magnetizer. Many women, even respectable ones, are taken in by this. . . . M. de Balzac has been fortunate enough to come forward at a moment when the imagination of woman has been greatly roused, since the emancipation of July, 1830, by the hopes and promises of Saint-Simonianism."

After Balzac's death Sainte-Beuve added the following to his former opinion : —

"Who has better painted the belles of the Empire? Above all, who has so delightfully sketched the duchesses and viscountesses of the close of the Restoration? — those women of thirty who, having had their day, awaited their painter with vague anxiety ; so much so that when they met, he and they, an electric shock of recognition passed between them. . . . The theory of the woman of thirty, with all her advantages and her positive perfections, is a product of to-day. M. de Balzac has invented her ; she is one of his most real discoveries. The key of his immense success lies here. For this women have forgiven him much, and they take his word on all occasions because he has, this once, so well understood them."

M. Taine, in his flux of words on Balzac, gives but little space or thought to his work on woman and thus dismisses it : —

"The nature of woman is made up of nervous delicacy, refined and active imagination, native and acquired reserve. This is enough to say that it has almost

always escaped Balzac's comprehension. . . . Wherever there is a deformity or a wound Balzac is there. And what are the promises of happiness and liberty that he offers? — money, carriage, an opera-box. . . . When Balzac tries to paint virtue, religion, or love, he is hampered by their sublimity. . . . His finest portraits of women are elsewhere, among the poor grotesque fools, pretentious, silly or nagging, spurred by the devil's claw which their fat libertine of a father, Balzac, never fails to stick into them. . . . Wherever there is a sore or a deformity Balzac is found in his quality as a physiologist."

Among the critics of the present day Mr. Henry James says, in substance, that Balzac's women are made up of duplicity, — there are few human accomplishments for which he expressed so explicit a respect. "Balzac is supposed to have understood the feminine organism as no one else had done before him; to have had the feminine heart, feminine temperament, feminine nerves at his finger's ends; to have turned the feminine puppet as it were inside out. . . . It may be said that women are the keystone of the *Comédie Humaine;* if they were taken out the whole fabric would collapse. . . . It seems to us that his superior handling of woman is both a truth and a fallacy. To begin with, he does not take that view of the sex that would commend him to the female sympathizers of the day. There is not a line in him that would not be received with hisses at any convention for giving woman the suffrage or admitting them to Harvard College. . . . He takes the old-fashioned view of woman as the female of man, and in all respects his subordinate. . . . Her *métier* may be all

summed up as the art of titillating, in one way or other, the senses of man. Woman has a 'mission' certainly, and this is it."

Women themselves have had no voice in this judgment so far as the public are aware. It is not likely that many could be found to endorse the views just quoted, because, in the first place (and without touching upon the question of Balzac at all) the tone of these remarks is contemptuous of womanhood. They belong to a period of ideas on which is written *passagère.*

When we turn to Balzac himself for their refutation we find that we must go to his life as well as to his books, in order to discover the spirit of his mind towards woman. He was not, as a general thing, in the habit of enunciating principles; he lived them and made his characters live and illustrate them. We may not find a confession of faith on this subject, but enough remains of his words and deeds to show plainly what was his own conception of woman and her relation to man, — what it was, and what it ought to be.

If we look back to the earliest years when a sentiment towards women could enter his soul, we find that nothing could exceed the ardor with which he longed to meet a woman-angel; to him pure love was the coming together of two angelic natures; and these thoughts kept him pure in heart and deed during his adolescent life. The mind that analyzed itself in *Louis Lambert* analyzed this particular belief and developed it in *Séraphita.* In that book Balzac, while dealing with the theories of Swedenborg, went far beyond them in his perception of the one great truth on which the world should hinge were it not out of joint.

He saw early that man is a dual being; that man *and* woman are needed to express humanity. He saw also that the thread of the Divine which makes man in the image of God is transmitted through woman; that she is the soul of humanity, regaining full intuition of God. Man is, in himself, not man but male; unable to bring his powers to bear until he recognizes and appropriates Her as his soul; through her alone he attains to manhood and is enabled to act. She is the transmitter of the Divine effluence, the inspirer; he is the worker, the executor. It is not until her qualities of endurance, love, and intuition are added to his qualities of will, force, and intellect that he is a man at all, capable of any hope or any ambition beyond the grovelling and passing life of his threescore years and ten. Receiving this impulse from her, power is born in him, and he ultimates this power, this effluence, in acts.

This is no new doctrine. It has existed through the ages; for it is the essential truth of all things, and the world is out of joint because we have drifted so far away from it. Each soul is an epitome of it, for sex has only an earthly and limited meaning; the human soul is man and woman both. Once recognized, and the function of woman admitted, "there is no height of goodness or knowledge to which she cannot raise the man; if only he follows her lead and keeps her free from defilement by Matter and Sense, the direct traffic with which appertains to him. In order properly to fulfil her function in regard to man and attract his gaze upward, she must herself aspire continually to the Divine Spirit within her, the central sun of herself as she is that of the man; and the clearness with which she dis-

cerns and transmits the Divine Spirit depends upon her own purity. If, withdrawing her gaze from it, she fixes her eyes on things without and below, she falls, and in her fall takes him with her. On the other hand, as Soul and Intuition of Spirit, she leads him, physically and mentally, from dissipation and perdition in the outer and the material. She is the vehicle of the Divine Life; the transmitter of virtue, which is courage, the one stable principle of human evolution." — "She is the spiritual element in humanity, lacking union with which man must be chained forever to the material, and waste his energies in struggles and labors which, even when most successful, only carry him farther from the true purpose of life, and render emancipation from carnal conditions more tedious and difficult. Goethe, like Balzac, penetrated to the heart of the great problem in the last scene of the second part of Faust. His *Ewig-Weibliche* is the divine element which woman both embodies and typifies, and to the purifying and stimulating effluence from which Man is indebted for whatever degree of enfranchisement from the clogging embraces of materialism he is able to accomplish. This is the force which *zieht uns hinan*, which lifts us toward higher spheres and inspires us with nobler aims; which on the physical plane keeps before our dull and earth-drawn eyes constant examples of self-sacrifice, altruism, patience, compassion, and love stronger than death; which is most effective in subduing and extirpating the animal tendencies and inclinations from our nature, and in substituting impulses and aspirations which may give us foothold in the path that leads to a life better worth living. In the figure of Séraphita we behold the final

efflorescence of such endeavor during which the dominant impulse has been uniformly spiritual, and through which the carnal elements have been gradually subdued until at length they suffice only to give the mortal form consistency, and to supply the physical means of that inevitable agony of temptation which is the price of translation to the Divine." [1]

Much of the misery of the world, possibly all of it, is attributable to the ignorance or the rejection of this vital truth. The ghastly human miseries which come from what we call "unhappy marriages" are explicable when we consider that the world is practically ignorant of this law. All men are now educated to believe that power and the highest knowledge are vested in them; all women are now educated to receive this as true. But mark what happens. A man and woman truly love each other and marry; there is every *a-priori* reason to suppose that a beautiful and solid life in common will be reared. It fails. Why? Because (1) the man unconsciously looks for this power from his wife, all the while consciously acting as if he were (as he has been taught he is) the source of power; and because (2) the woman loyally tries to accept what she has been taught, namely, that he is the source of power and knowledge, when all the while she is learning (unconsciously) that he is not; and because (3) she is seldom clear enough in her mind to think the truth out as it is,

[1] For a further understanding of this subject, which can be only briefly stated here, the reader is referred to the American translation of *Séraphita* and to its introduction. 1 vol. Roberts Bros.: Boston, 1890. Also to "The Perfect Way; or, The Finding of Christ." 1 vol. Scribner and Welford: New York, 1882.

and to recognize early enough her real mission, — which is (applying what has already been said) to transmit illumination and power to him and receive them back from him put into act and use.

Balzac early perceived this truth. It must have come to such a thinker on the threshold of his inquisition into human life. The task lay before him, imposed by the bent of his genius, to exhibit the world to itself under all its aspects, with a picture of its diseases, the secret of its distortions, and the possibility of a return to purity. "In seeing me," he says in his preface to the *Comédie Humaine*, "collect this mass of facts and paint them as they are, in their element of passionate emotion, some persons have imagined, very erroneously, that I belong to the school of materialists and sensualists. They are mistaken. I put no faith in any indefinite advancement of Society; but I believe in the development and progress of the individual human being. Those who find in me a disposition to look on man as a complete being are strangely deceived. *Séraphita* is my answer to this accusation. In copying the whole of society, and in trying to seize its likeness from the midst of the seething struggle, it necessarily happens that more of evil than of good is shown. Thus some portion of the fresco representing a guilty group excites the cry of immorality, while the critics fail to point out a corresponding part which was intended to show a moral contrast. The day of impartial judgment has not yet dawned for me; and I may add that the writer who cannot stand the fire of criticism is no more fit to start upon the career of authorship than a traveller is fit to undertake a journey if prepared only for

fine weather. I shall merely remark that, although the most scrupulous moralists have doubted whether Society is able to show as much good as it shows evil, yet in the pictures that I have made of it the virtuous characters outnumber the bad. Blameworthy conduct, faults, crimes, have invariably received their punishment, human or divine, evident or secret. In this I have done better than the historian, for I have been free to do so. History cannot, like the novel, hold up the law of a higher ideal. History is, or should be, a picture of the world as it has been; the novel (to use a saying of Madame Necker) *should paint a possible better world.*"

And he goes on to give, with pathetic insistence, a list of the virtuous and irreproachable women who are to be found in his works. Reading that list of women, all strongly individual, nearly all powerful agents in the places assigned to them, we may well wonder that a critic could have found it in his mind to say that Balzac's view of woman's *métier* may be summed up as the art of titillating in one way or another the senses of man. Here are the women in whom Balzac meant to typify the best of human nature, that which has a tendency to uplift and redeem the rest: Constance Birotteau, Eugénie Grandet, Ursule Mirouët, Pierrette Lorain, Marguerite Claës, La Fosseuse, Pauline de Villenoix, Madame Jules, Madame de la Chanterie, Ève Chardon, Mademoiselle d'Esgrignon, Renée de Maucombe, Madame Firmiani, and many others on the second plane.

The true reason why women are and always have been friends to Balzac, whether as readers and stu-

dents or in actual life, is because he has perceived and asserted their rightful place in humanity. He has endeavored to inspire them with a sense — through awful and revolting pictures, it is true — of the consequences of falling away from it. He preaches through facts, never didactically; but women have seen, more or less consciously, his meaning, and, inspired by a hidden sense within them, they have heard his call to bring about, "a possible better world." This is a reason which escapes male critics. But it would be quite untrue to assert that such critics are wrong when they say that the women of thirty or forty or any indefinite age are won by the extension which Balzac gives to their period of charm, and by the importance which he assigns to their part in life. On the contrary, all that magnifies their influence and lifts it from the more material plane of youth and beauty, where so many of their perils lie, is justly welcome to women.

The keynote of Balzac as a moralist is therefore his belief that woman is the Soul of man. He early saw the distortions in society caused by the ignoring of this truth, and we must take his word to Madame de Castries and to Madame Carraud (already quoted) that his object in writing the *Physiologie du Mariage,* in 1829, was to awaken ideas favorable to the emancipation and higher education of women and to insist on their natural and inalienable rights. The book is not suitable for translation, — the same medicine not being suited to all constitutions. The Anglo-Saxon mind is shocked by a jeering or jesting moralism, which it calls cynicism. But, under any circumstances, the

subject is not tolerable to the conventions of our day, which would rather not see truth, and when it sees it escapes it by calling it immoral. Tolstoï, when dealing with the same subject, conscientiously, in his outwardly brutal and shocking manner, has been tabooed. The day has not come when it can be dealt with; but whosoever shall hereafter deliver a message upon it which shall reach the universal heart and conscience will do a deed for women in which Balzac intended to do, and has done, his part.

At what particular period in his youth these beliefs as to the true nature of woman's influence came to him, it is impossible to say, all records of that period having been destroyed. Whether they were the outcome of the lad's own mind, trained by the meditations at Vendôme and by the noble virginity of the senses of which he speaks in *Louis Lambert*, or whether Balzac was led to this study by a need to understand how and why it was that he derived his own force from a woman, cannot now be told. We know that he placed before his mind many questions derived from the phenomena of his own experience, and there are facts which justify us in thinking that he did so now. Very early in life, not later probably than his twenty-third or twenty-fourth year, he met the woman-angel for whom he longed, and who, thenceforth, inspired his life until some great catastrophe overtook their love. All traces of her name and personality are lost, no doubt destroyed; all letters and records of the period during which she influenced him are missing. Such veils should not be vulgarly pushed aside; happily they cannot be in the present instance; whatever is said must perforce

have the reserve and delicacy with which Balzac himself shrouded his feelings. A few scattered signs alone remain to tell of what he passed through, but they are full of significance; and a strong retrospective light is thrown upon his mental condition during those years by his letters to Madame Hanska, the love of his later life — for Love, like history, repeats itself.

The most distinct mention of this early love is that by Théophile Gautier (already quoted). Once only did Balzac make allusion to it, and even then he could say no more than the first name of her whose memory so affected him that after many years his eyes still filled with tears. That this love was the influence by which his early life was shaped, that from this woman he derived his force and his ambition, and that their mutual love ended in some great sorrow, no one who studies Balzac's life can doubt. To judge of it we must put ourselves in his place; we must comprehend the force of his imagination and the excessive sensibility of his spirit. Later, twenty years later, when the thought that he might possibly lose Madame Hanska comes over him, he says: "If the hope of my life were to fail me, if I lost you, I should not kill myself, I should not make myself a priest, — for the thought of you would give me strength to endure my life; but I would go to some unknown corner of France, in the Pyrénées or the Ariége, and slowly die, doing and knowing nothing more in this world."

These words throw a vivid light on the anguish of his mind in earlier years.

He makes a few allusions to this cherished woman in his letters. Speaking of Pauline in the *Peau de*

Chagrin he says: "For me she exists, only more beautiful; if I have made her into a vision it is that no one may be master of my secret." And again, writing to Madame d'Abrantès in 1828, he says: "I have always been crushed beneath a terrible weight. I am sometimes surprised that I have nothing now to struggle against except outward misfortune. You may question all those about me and you will never obtain any light on the nature of my sorrows. There are those who die and the physician himself is unable to say what malady has carried them off." Madame Surville alludes in her narrative to some "great mental shock" in early youth, as the origin of his heart-disease; and he says himself, when writing to his sister in the last year of his life from Madame Hanska's home in the Ukraine, and telling her of the progress of his illness: "These terrible suffocations attack me when distressed, or when I feel an emotion too ardently. My life ought, for my health's sake, to be rose-colored. The origin of this disease was the cruelty of that lady whom you know of."

Théophile Gautier points to *Albert Savarus* as the secret history of this love; and he is doubtless right. Possibly he may have had some private means of judging; the tone of his remark implies as much. *Albert Savarus* is the story of a man's first love for woman, his inspirer, the source from whom he derives his power of action. That this unnamed woman's influence was such to Balzac, and that for years he was *l'ambitieux par amour* — ambitious through love — cannot be doubted. No man could have made the fight that he did, against such odds from within and from without,

from purely personal views of self-development. He must have had some motive power upon him; and if Théophile Gautier is right we may find its nature in that remarkable book. What the end was of this great love (which bore fruit in so many of his greatest books) will probably never be known. That it was disastrous is certain. If it did not follow the lines laid down in the story the catastrophe was the same. There is much in his life that connects itself with this, — his seclusion, his craving for solitude, the Trappist robe he wore, the instinctive turning of his soul to Nature as the great consoler.

One quality has been attributed to Balzac which cannot be passed over in silence, all the more because it is especially allied to this early phase of his life. We have already seen how those who knew him most intimately applied the word "chaste" to his nature. Théophile Gautier says (from actual discussion with him) that in his opinion real chastity developed to the highest degree the powers of the mind and gave to those who practised it mysterious faculties; and Gautier further adds that in the opinion of Balzac's most intimate friends he practised the chastity he recommended to others. Without making any assertions on this point, as to which during his middle life there is no evidence either way, it is right to call attention to this opinion of his intimate associates, men who would certainly not have made the same claim for themselves, nor, perhaps, have desired to do so. It is well to remember that this was the impression his nature made upon them; in spite, too, of his jovial gayety and free speech. We may add, as a matter both of fact and of suggestion, that this

characteristic of chastity, which was not a negative thing in a man of Balzac's temperament, but the result of his powerful will, was the secret of his ability to enter into the nature of woman and to apprehend her highest relation to man, — a relation not limited to earth, though rightfully bound by its conditions while this life lasts. An anecdote is told of him which illustrates this point and gives pleasure to the reader of it: —

On some occasion when Balzac happened to be at Marseilles the young men of that town, under the leadership of Méry, gave him a banquet. An eye-witness relates that Balzac arrived punctually, holding in his hand a little snuff-box which he had bought of an antiquary for three hundred francs on his way to the dinner. The descendants of the Phocian colony, feeling it incumbent on them to offer due homage to the great writer, the exponent of woman, turned the conversation upon the sex. Méry, the wittiest of men, was their mouthpiece. He made a brilliant speech, of a free nature, disrespectful to women. Balzac listened and said nothing; he crumbled his bread and played with his snuff-box, with which he seemed much pleased. But when a pause came and he was evidently expected to take up the subject, he replied with such a warm defence of women, made with so much judgment and delicacy that Méry was completely abashed; and the memory of that banquet and of Balzac's defence of womanhood long survived in the memory of those present.

In the midst of the heavy troubles of all kinds which beset Balzac at the opening of his career he had the good fortune to find encouragement, advice, and sympathy in the friendship of several women of rare

distinction of mind and character. First, and paramount among them, was Madame de Berny, whose early death withdrew her, only too soon, from the tender gratitude of her young friend. She was, undoubtedly, the confidant of his early sorrow, and his chief support and means of consolation under it. The destruction, or concealment, of their correspondence was owing to the fact that it concerned those circumstances of his life which he desired to keep secret. In his other letters he makes many allusions to Mme. de Berny, which show his ardent gratitude and deep attachment to her. Those in his letters to Madame Carraud have already been quoted. To another friend he says, speaking of her death: "She whom I have lost was more than a mother, more than a friend, more than any creature can be to another creature. I can explain her only as divinity. She sustained me under great sorrows by words, by actions, by devotion. If I still live it is through her. She has been all to me; and though for the last two years illness and the lapse of time had separated us, yet we were plainly visible to each other from a distance. She re-acted upon me; she was, as it were, my moral sun. Madame de Mortsauf in the *Lys* is a pale expression of her noble qualities; it is but a distant reflection of her, for I have a horror of prostituting my own emotions, and the world will never know the sorrows that overcome me."

He mentions elsewhere that from the year 1821 she had never failed to give him daily two hours of her time, snatched from society, from her family, from her various duties, and from all the attractions of Parisian life. "Twelve years," he exclaims, "of a sublime de-

votion which saved me!" Madame Surville has already told us what he suffered at her death. In her narrative she withholds his letters on the subject; but in one of them, which is included in the *Correspondance*, there is this allusion to Madame de Berny: —

"Les Jardies, 1839.

"I am alone to face my troubles. Formerly I had one to help me conquer them, — the gentlest and most courageous being upon earth; a woman who is reborn daily in my heart, and whose divine qualities make all other friendships pale by the side of hers. I have no longer an adviser on my literary difficulties, no longer a supporter in the difficulties of life. I have no other guide than the thought, 'What would she say if she were living?' Minds like hers are rare. The intimacy which might have been so dear to me between you and me is prevented by your duties as wife and mother. There is only Madame Zulma [Carraud] among those in whom I can trust who has the intellect to play *her* part to me. Never was there a more remarkable mind smothered so completely as Madame Zulma's; she will die unrecognized in her lonely corner. Madame Hanska could be everything to me; but I cannot be a burden on her fate; and even if I could, I would not, unless she knew well what she was undertaking."

The following extracts are from his letters to Madame Hanska before her husband's death, and while his feelings for her did not exceed the limits of a warm friendship: —

"Paris, August, 1835.[1]

"You have been ill! you have suffered! and always *for* and *through* others, — ever the same self-abnegation!

"If you only remain a short time in Vienna, how shall I send you *Séraphita* and *Le Lys dans la Vallée?* Should you decide to return home at once, give me your exact address. In a country so barren of resources as yours and in the depths of the desert you are about to inhabit perhaps my letters may be more welcome than amid the gayeties you are now enjoying, and which, I fear, they have sometimes interrupted too gloomily. May you never know the bitter sadness that comes of deception, which the sense of loneliness increases; and this at the very moment when we may happen to need the special support of friends. I must own to you that the cruel conviction is growing upon me that I cannot much longer bear up under my hard work. They talk of victims of war and epidemics; but who thinks of the battlefields of art, science, literature, and of the mounds of dead and dying slain by their efforts to succeed? . . .

"I am, perhaps, on the eve of beginning a political existence which may in time give me a certain influence, even if it does not lead to a high position. But it does not tempt me; for I feel it to be outside of my tastes and my natural habits of mind and character. Certain persons powerful in will and influential in position — statesmen — have approached me on the subject, and two newspapers have sounded me. One of the latter

[1] This is the first letter to Mme. Hanska which has been preserved. Previous letters were burned by a fire which occurred in M. Hanski's house in Moscow.

has many subscribers, not in France only, but all over Europe. If these papers were united under an intelligent and capable editor, they could become a power. Two other journals would enter the association, and we should found a fifth. The end would be, sooner or later, the triumph of the party they represent. But what ought we to call that party? 'That is the question.' Shall it be the party of men of intellect, or the party of Intelligence? . . . The scheme is a fine one; but to put it into execution is another matter. So I merely listen, and make no reply to the flattering or the merely agreeable speeches addressed to me.

"You ask me to tell you of my daily life. That would be troubling you with many annoyances and vexations. I should have to tell you of an endless series of comings and goings to meet my payments and do my business honorably. Life in Paris involves a frightful waste of time; and time is the material out of which life is made, so they say. When I am not bending over my writing by the light of my candles, or lying exhausted on the sofa, I am rushing breathlessly about on business, sleeping little, eating little, — in short, like a Republican general fighting a campaign without bread or shoes. Solitude pleases me, however; for I hate the social life of the world, which bruises the heart and belittles the mind.

"Do not, I beg of you, make any comparison between the friendship which you inspire and that which you grant. Never allow yourself to imagine that I have ceased to love you; for though I may often be overworked, as I am now, yet in my hours of fatigue and despair, — hours when my energy relaxes, and I sit in

my chair with pendent arms and sunken head, body weary and mind depressed, — the wings of memory still bear me to the cool green shades which refreshed my soul, to her who smiles to me afar off, who has nothing in her heart that is not pure and true, who inspires me, reanimates me, and renews, if I may say so, by the excitement of the soul, those powers to which others give the name of talent. You are all this to me, and you know it; therefore never speak jestingly of my feelings, as you do sometimes."

"Paris, October, 1836.[1]

"I am depressed, but not utterly cast down; my courage remains to me. The feeling of desertion and the solitude in which I am left grieves me more than my other disasters. There is nothing selfish in me; but I do need to tell my thoughts, my efforts, my feelings to a being who is not *myself;* otherwise I have no strength. I should care for no crown unless there were feet at which to lay the honors men might put upon my head. . . . I have said a long and sad farewell to my lost years, — engulfed beyond recall! They gave me neither complete happiness nor complete misery; they kept me living, — frozen on one side, scorched on the other; and now I am conscious that nothing holds me to life but a sense of duty. I entered on my present phase of life with the feeling that I should die exhausted with my work; but I thought I should bear it better than I do. For the last month I have risen at midnight and gone to bed at six in the evening; and I have forced myself down to the lowest amount of food that

[1] This letter was written after his lawsuit with Buloz, when so many of his literary associates deserted him.

will support me, so as not to weary my brain by digestion. Well, not only do I feel weaknesses which I could not describe to you, but, with so much life driven to the brain, I experience strange things. Sometimes I lose the sense of verticality; even in bed my head seems to fall to the right or left; and when I rise I feel impelled by an enormous weight which is in my head. I understand how Pascal's absolute continence and vast mental labor made him see an abyss surrounding him, so that he was obliged to sit between two chairs, one on each side of him.

"I did not leave the rue Cassini without regret. I do not yet know whether I can keep a part of my furniture to which I am attached, or even my library. I have made, in advance, every sacrifice of lesser pleasures and memories that I may keep this one little joy of feeling that these things are still mine; they would not count for much in satisfying the thirst of my creditors, but they would slake mine in that march across the sands of the desert on which I am about to start.

"To show you how good my courage is, I must tell you that *Les Secrets des Ruggieri* was written in a single night; think of that when you read it. *La Vieille Fille* was written in three. *La Perle brisée*, which ends *L'Enfant Maudit*, was done in a few hours of moral and physical anguish; it was my Brienne, my Champaubert, my Montirail, in short, my campaign of France! But it was the same with *La Messe de l'Athée* and *Facino Cane*. I wrote the first fifty sheets of *Les Illusions Perdues* in three days at Saché. What kills me are the proof corrections. The first part of *L'Enfant Maudit* cost me more pains

than many volumes. I wanted to bring that part up to the plane of *La Perle brisée* and make them a sort of little poem of melancholy with which no fault could be found.

"This is the last plaint that I shall cast into your heart; in my confidences to you there is a certain selfishness which I must put an end to. When you are sad I will not aggravate your sadness, for I know that your sorrows aggravate mine. I know that the Christian martyrs smiled; and I know, too, that if Guatimozin had been a Christian he would have consoled his minister, and not have answered, 'And I — am I on a bed of roses?' A fine saying for an aboriginal; but Christ has made us more considerate, if not better.

"Well, adieu; the day is dawning; my candles pale. For the last three hours I have been writing to you, line after line, hoping that in each you would hear the cry of a true feeling, deep, infinite as heaven, far above the petty and transitory vexations of this world, incapable of thinking that it can ever change. What would be the good of intellect if not to place a noble thing upon a rock above us, where nothing material, nothing earthly can ever touch it?

"But this thought would lead me too far; my proofs are waiting. I must plunge into the Augean stable of my style, and sweep out its faults."

"Paris, January, 1838.

"Now as to the business which takes me to the Mediterranean;[1] it is neither marriage, nor anything adventurous, nor foolish, nor light-minded, nor im-

[1] His trip to Sardinia.

prudent. It is a serious and a scientific business, about which I can as yet tell you nothing, because I am pledged to absolute secrecy. Whether it turns out well or ill, as I risk nothing but the journey, which will, in any case, be a pleasure and a change for me, I think I may embark on this enterprise without anxiety.

"You ask me how it is that I who know so much (as you indulgently say), and can observe and penetrate all things, can also be so duped and deceived. Alas, would you respect me if I were never duped, if I were so prudent, so observing, that no deceptions ever happened to me? But, putting that view of the question aside, I will tell you the secret of this apparent contradiction. You can readily see that when a man becomes an accomplished whist-player and knows after the fifth card is played where all the others are, he should like to put science aside and watch how the game will go by the laws of chance? Just so, you dear and fervent Catholic, God knew that Eve would yield, but he let her alone to do so. Or, if you do not like that way of explaining the matter, here is still another which may please you better. When, night and day, my strength and my faculties are strained to the utmost to invent, write, render, paint, recall; when I take my flight slowly, painfully, often with wounded wing, across the mental spaces of literary creation, how can I be at the same time on the plane of material things? When Napoleon was at Essling he was not in Spain. I do see plainly enough that persons are deceiving me, or that they are going to do so; that such and such man has betrayed me, or will betray me and carry

away a bit of my fleece; but just at that moment, when I see it all clearly, I am compelled to go and fight elsewhere; copy has to be delivered; or some book will be spoiled unless I finish it. . . .

"I have said for the last twelve years what you now say to me about Walter Scott. Beside him, Byron is nothing, or almost nothing. You are mistaken about the plot of 'Kenilworth.' In the opinion of all makers of tales, and in mine, the plan of that work is the grandest, the most complete, the most wonderful of all. It is a masterpiece from that point of view, just as 'St. Ronan's Well' is a masterpiece in detail and patient finish, the 'Chronicles of the Canongate' in sentiment, 'Ivanhoe' (the first volume, be it said) for its historical quality, the 'Antiquary' for poetry, the 'Heart of Mid-Lothian' for interest; each of those books has its own particular interest, but genius shines over all. You are right, — Scott will live and grow after Byron is forgotten; but I speak of Byron read in translation; the poet in the original must ever live, if only for his form and his impetuous force; though Byron's brain never had any imprint on it except that of his own personality; but the whole world posed before the creative genius of Scott and was there reflected.

"It is very kind of Monsieur Hanski to imagine that women fall in love with authors. Tell him that I have, and have had, nothing to fear on that score. I am not only invulnerable but secure from attack. The Englishwoman of the times of Crébillon the younger is not the Englishwoman of to-day.

"I do not read the newspapers; you can easily believe I have not the time; therefore I am ignorant of what

you tell me of Jules Janin, who takes, I hear, an attitude of open hostility to me personally and to my works. I am, as you know, indifferent to the blame as well as to the praise of those who are not the elect of my heart, above all to that of journalism, and, generally, to that of what is called "the public." . . . To sum it all up let me say that whenever you hear that I have yielded in matters of principle, honor, and personal self-respect, do not believe it.

"After idling a little for a month, — going two or three times to the Opera, and as often to La Belgiojoso and sometimes to La Visconti (speaking in the Italian fashion), — and having had enough, and too much, of that sort of thing, I am glad to be quit of it and to go back to my work of twelve and fifteen hours a day. When my house is built and I am fairly installed and have earned two or three thousand francs of my own, I have promised myself the reward of going to see you, not, as you say, for a week or two, but for two or three months. You shall work over my comedies and during that time Monsieur Hanski and I will be off to the Indies, astride on those smoky benches you tell me of.

"The Princesse Belgiojoso is a woman wholly unlike all other women, — not attractive according to my ideas; pale with Italian pallor, thin, with a touch of the vampire. She has the good fortune not to please me. With a good mind, she shows it too much; she is always trying for effect, and missing her end by pursuing it with visible care and effort. I first met her five years ago at Gérard's. She came from Switzerland, where she had taken refuge. Since then she has recovered her great fortune, thanks to the influence of our Foreign

Office, and now lives in conformity with her position. Her house is on a good scale, and the talk one hears there is witty. I have gone two Saturdays and dined there once, that is all. . . . Skin-deep affections (*les amitiés d'épiderme*) do not suit me; they weary me, and make me feel more keenly than ever the treasures contained in the hearts that shelter me. In this respect I am not a Frenchman in the lighter acceptation of the word."

"Ajaccio, March 26, 1838.

"Dear Countess, — This date will show you that I am only twenty hours distant from Sardinia. When I tell you that my present enterprise is a desperate effort to put an end to my business troubles you will not be surprised by it. I only risk a month of my time and five hundred francs for the chance of a great fortune.

"Monsieur Carraud decided me. I submitted certain scientific conjectures to him. As he is a very learned man, who does nothing, publishes nothing, and is lazy, there was no obstruction to his opinion being given, as it was, in favor of my ideas. He says that whether I succeed or do not succeed, he respects the idea as most ingenious. There is no scientific problem he cannot explain if questioned. But the trouble is that these vast mathematical minds judge of life only by what it is; they do not see the logical end of it; and so they await death to be rid of life. This vegetable existence is the despair of Mme. Carraud, who is all soul and fire. She was utterly amazed when she heard Monsieur Carraud propose to go with me, — he who will not leave the house to attend to his own affairs. However, the natural man returned to him and he gave up the project.

"Here I am, alone in Napoleon's native town. I have been to see the house where he was born; it is a poor hovel. I have rectified a few mistakes. His father was a rather rich land-owner, and not a mere clerk, as several lying biographers have said. Also, when he reached Ajaccio on his way back from Egypt, instead of being received with acclamations, as the historians aver, a price was put on his head. They showed me the little beach where he landed. He owed his life to the courage and devotion of a peasant, who took him to the mountains and hid him in an inaccessible place.

"I am going to Sassari, the second capital of Sardinia, where I shall not stay long, as what I have to do there will take no time at all. The great question will be decided in Paris. All I need to do is to obtain a specimen of *the thing*. You may puzzle your head, most gracious and intelligent lady of the manor, but you will never find out what that means.

"Corsica is one of the most magnificent countries in the world; mountains like those of Switzerland, but no fine lakes. France does not make the most of this noble country. It is as large as several of our departments, but does not yield as much as one of them; it ought to have five million of inhabitants, and there are less than three hundred thousand. We are beginning to make roads and clear forests, which alone are wealth. As the soil is wholly unexplored there may be the finest mines in the world of metal, marble, and coal. Unhappily, the country is not only unexplored, but it is not studied, nor even known, on account of bandits and the savage state into which it has lapsed."

"Alghiero, Sardinia, April 8.

"I am here after five days in a coral row-boat on its way to Africa, — a good voyage, but I learned the privations of mariners; nothing to eat but the fish we caught, which they boiled into an execrable soup. I had to sleep on deck and be devoured by insects, which abound, they say, in Sardinia. . . . Africa begins here. Already I see a naked population, bronzed like Ethiopians."

"Cagliari, April 17th.

"I have crossed the whole of Sardinia, and seen things such as they tell us of the Hurons or the Polynesians. A desert kingdom, real savages, no husbandry; long stretches of palm-trees and cactus, goats browsing on the undergrowth and keeping it down to the level of their heads. I have been seventeen to eighteen hours on horseback (I who have not mounted a horse for the last four years) without seeing a single dwelling. I went through a virgin forest lying on the neck of my horse in fear of my life, for I had to ride through a water-course arched over with branches and climbing plants which threatened to put out my eyes, break my teeth, and even wrench off my head. Gigantic oaks, cork-trees, laurel and heather thirty feet high. Nothing to eat. As soon as I reached the end of my expedition I had to think of returning: so, without taking any rest I rode on to Sassari, where I found a diligence which brought me to this place. I passed through a region where the inhabitants make a horrible bread by pounding green acorns and mixing the flour with clay, — and this within sight of beautiful Italy! Men and women go naked, with a bit of cloth to hide their nudity. No

habitation has a chimney; they make their fires in the middle of their huts, which are full of soot. The women spend their time in pounding the acorns and making clay bread; the men keep the goats and cattle. The soil is uncultivated in the richest spot on earth. And yet, in the midst of this utter and inexplicable misery, there were villages where the costumes of the peasantry were of amazing richness!

"I have put off writing to Monsieur Hanski until I reach Milan and can give him some real news. I have thought of you often on my adventurous trip, and I fancy I can hear Monsieur Hanski saying, 'What the devil is he doing in that *galère?*'"[1]

"Milan, May 20, 1838.

"Dear Countess, — You know all that that date says to me. To-day I begin the year at the end of which I shall belong to the vast, unnumbered company of the resigned. I swore to myself in the days of sorrow, struggle, and faith which made my youth so miserable that I would struggle no more against anything whatsoever when I reached the age of forty. That terrible year has begun for me far from you, far from my own people, in bitter sadness which nothing

[1] It is unnecessary to repeat here in our limited space the story of his disappointment. Madame Surville has given it in her narrative with general correctness, but with one mistake. The discovery that the Genoese had obtained a grant to the mines followed immediately on Balzac's return from his journey, without the delay of a year, as his sister states. He had taken up the idea the previous year when at Genoa. His enthusiasm induced the Genoese to apply for the grant. When Balzac made his journey the following year he was then too late, as he discovered on landing at Genoa.

can dissipate; for of myself I cannot change my fate, and I no longer believe that some fortunate event may modify it.

"I came here from Genoa on my way to France, and I have stayed on to do a work for which the inspiration has suddenly come to me after I had vainly implored it for several years. I have never read a book in which happy love, satisfied love, has been pictured. Rousseau used too much rhetoric; Richardson preached too much; the poets are too flowery, the novel-writers slaves to fact; Petrarch thought too much of his imagery, his *concetti*, — he saw poetry better than he did women; Pope overdid the grief of Heloïse, — he wanted to make her better than nature, and the better, they say, is the enemy of the good. It may be that God, who created love with humanity, alone understands it. Certainly none of his creatures, as I think, have truly rendered the sorrows, imaginations, and poesies of that divine passion, which every one talks of, and so few have known. . . .

"I have been sitting on a bench for nearly an hour with my eyes fixed on the Duomo, fascinated by the memories your letter brought to me. What unutterable sadness to be so near you in thought, so far in reality! Ah, dear fraternal soul, the Duomo was glorious, sublime, to me in that hour of June! I lived a lifetime beneath it. . . .

"I went yesterday to see the Luini frescos at Saronno, and they seem to me worthy of their fame. The one that represents the marriage of the Virgin has a peculiar charm about it; the figures are angelic, and, what is rare in frescos, the tones are mellow and harmonious."

"Paris, June 10, 1838.

"I crossed the Saint-Gothard, with fifteen feet of snow on the path I took; the road was not distinguishable even by the tall stone posts which mark it. The bridges across the mountain-torrents were no more visible than the torrents themselves. I came near losing my life in spite of the eleven guides who were with me. We crossed the summit at one o'clock in the morning by a sublime moonlight, and I saw the sunrise tinting the snows. A man must see that sight once in his life. I came down so rapidly that in half an hour I had passed from twenty-five degrees below freezing (which it was on the summit) to I don't know what degree of heat in the Vallée de la Reuss. After the horrors of the Devil's bridge I crossed the Lake of the Four Cantons at four in the afternoon. It has been a splendid journey; but I must do it again in summer, to see all those noble sights under a new aspect. . . .

"Believe that I have perfect confidence in your literary judgment; I have made you in that respect the successor of the friend whom I have lost. What you say to me becomes the subject of long and serious meditation; and I now want your criticism on *La Vieille Fille*. Show neither pity nor indulgence; go boldly at it. Should I not be most unworthy of the friendship you deign to feel for me if in our intimate correspondence I allowed the petty vanity of an author to affect me? . . . I beg you to be concise in praise, and prolix in criticism. Wait for reflection; do not write to me after the first reading. If you knew how much instinct, or rather I should say critical genius, there is in what you write to me, you would be proud

of yourself, though you prefer to leave that sentiment to your friends.

"Yes, — now don't defend yourself; don't make your familiar little gesture, and hide your eyes with those white and dimpled fingers! — yes, our best contemporaneous critics are not wiser than you. You make me reflect over my work so that I often remodel my ideas on what you say. You will believe this, for you know well that, though I am sincere in all things, I am especially sincere in art. I have none of that paternal foolishness which ties a band round the eyes of so many authors; and if *La Vieille Fille* has no merit, I shall have the courage to cut it out.

"I have been home eight days, and I have made unavailing efforts to take up my work. My head refuses to do any intellectual work; it is full of ideas, but none will come out. I am incapable of fixing my thoughts or of constraining my mind to consider a subject under all its aspects, and so resolving on a course. I don't know when this imbecility will cease; perhaps it is only the result of having lost my customary habits of work."

"Les Jardies, July, 1838.

"At present the house is not furnished, but it will be little by little. Just now I have an old cook of my mother's and her husband to wait on me.

"I shall stay here till my fortune is made; and I am already so pleased with the life that when I have earned the capital of my tranquillity I think I shall want to finish my days here in peace, bidding farewell, without flourish of trumpets, to all my hopes, aspirations, ambitions, — in short, to everything. The life you lead

— that life of country solitude — has great charms for me. I did want more because I had nothing at all, and once in the domain of illusions, it costs a young man nothing to wish for much. To-day my failure in success has wearied my character, — I do not say my heart, which will ever hope, under all circumstances. . . .

"I must tell you that I have been painfully struck by the extreme melancholy of your religious views. For some time past your letters have seemed to mean, 'Earth no longer interests me; I have nothing more to do with it.' You do not know how many deductions, ill-founded perhaps, I draw from this. But, as you say it to me in all sincerity, you must be expressing what you feel; if not, you would be false or distrustful, when you should be all truth with an old friend like me. Even if I displease you, I must say in confidence that I am not satisfied, and that I should like to see you in another state of mind. To seek God in this way means renouncing the world; and I cannot understand why you should renounce it when you have so many ties to bind you to it, and so many duties to fulfil. None but feeble or guilty souls can really take such views."

No letters to Madame Hanska appear in the *Correspondance* during the years 1839, 1840, 1841, and 1842.

CHAPTER X.

LAST YEARS.

The last eight years of Balzac's life are contained in the history of his intercourse with Madame Hanska. His health was already failing; although this fact does not seem to have struck the minds of his friends and contemporaries. His robust and vigorous appearance and sunny disposition probably misled them; but in his letters we may trace, unmistakably, that the springs of life were giving way. His own belief in the destructive power of Thought and Will was never more exemplified than in his own experience. This belief he has illustrated again and again in his books, and was now to illustrate in his life. The blade wore out the scabbard.[1]

Monsieur Hanski died in the winter of 1842–43, and in August and September of the latter year Balzac made his first visit to St. Petersburg, with the result, on his side, of an absorbing love which superseded all other thoughts and hopes in his mind; and on Madame Hanska's side, of an evident affection and a desire for

[1] The reader is referred to the American translation of *La Peau de Chagrin* and its Introduction. Also to the Introduction to the *Études Philosophiques*, nominally by Felix Davin, really by Balzac himself; reprinted in de Lovenjoul's "Hist. des Œuvres de Balzac," page 194.

his allegiance, tempered by a sense of other duties, — duties to her daughter and to her property, — which made her reluctant to consider the question of marriage. It was not until they were at Strasburg together in 1846 that she pledged herself to him; and his letters from 1843 to 1846 betray the injury her doubts and hesitations did to his mind, and probably to his health. Even after the promise had been made she could not be brought to fulfil it; and it was only in 1849 that he felt any assurance that the marriage would take place. Some of the difficulties which Madame Hanska put forward were genuine; others seem to have proceeded from her reluctance to take the final step; though it is quite evident that she never for a moment thought of relinquishing Balzac's devotion.

Among the serious difficulties which beset the marriage was the difference of nationality. It was necessary to obtain the Czar's permission, and this was long withheld. Monsieur Hanski had left his wife an immense landed property and the guardianship of their daughter. Russian law is extremely rigid in its interpretation of such duties. Madame Hanska went to St. Petersburg in the spring of 1843 for the legal settlement of her affairs, and she seems to have then become aware that marriage with a foreigner could not take place without the relinquishment of her whole fortune to her daughter. It is evident that she was a woman of deep natural affections and a devoted sense of duty; no personal considerations of property influenced her, — for in the end she relinquished her fortune, — but her first duty was, obviously, to her child, then a girl of fourteen; and we cannot wonder that she refused to make so

great a change in her own life until the life of her daughter was more developed. The wonder rather is that a woman in her position should have thought of such a marriage at all; for Balzac could offer her nothing but a most unfortunate outward life, — crippled by debt. The fact that she loved him, and that her family loved him and desired the marriage, and treated him with filial respect and affection, is strong testimony to the sort of man he was. His genius, heart, and principles seemed to them to outweigh all other considerations; a testimony which does even more honor to their natures than to his.

When Balzac left Madame Hanska at St. Petersburg, in September, 1843, she promised to meet him the following year at Dresden. The promise was broken; but she made a short visit to Paris in the summer of 1844. She did not go to Dresden till the beginning of 1845, and even then she put obstacles in the way of his joining her until April, when she sent for him. In the following September he again met her at Baden, and by that time the chief obstacle between them was in fair way to be removed, — her daughter Anna being engaged to marry a young Polish nobleman, Comte Georges Mniszeck, the owner of a vast and very beautiful estate in Volhynia, which Balzac describes as another Versailles.

The following winter Madame Hanska, her daughter, and the young count went to Italy, inviting Balzac to accompany them. He met them at Chalons, and together they went to Naples, he himself returning to Paris in January, 1846, but rejoining them in Rome in March of that year. The young couple were married

during the summer, and Balzac was soon after summoned to join Madame Hanska at Wiesbaden. It was during a visit they paid at that time to Strasburg that she first pledged herself to marry him. Later, in the same year, he made her a flying visit of four days at Wiesbaden, which led his lively friend, Madame de Girardin, to call him "il vetturino per amore," — for we must remember, difficult as it may be to do so, that in those days railroads were not.

During these years Balzac's life in Paris had passed through periods of great depression, when he felt himself physically and mentally incapable of hard work; although the necessity for it was even greater than ever; for he now began, silently, and apparently taking no one into his confidence, to prepare for this hoped-for marriage. Little by little, he collected his treasures of rare old furniture, pictures, and works of art of all kinds, and not long after Madame Hanska's pledge was given he bought and remodelled the little house in the rue Fortunée, of which Gautier has told us.

From time to time during these years his natural vigor and his inspiration returned to him. He tells of this joyously, with all his former eagerness; but, as a general thing, the reader feels that his wing is broken. Reference to the chronological list in the appendix to this volume will show the work he did during these years, in the course of which he produced (among other less remarkable tales) three of his greatest books, and one of his noblest characters: *Les Paysans*, the two volumes of *Les Parents Pauvres*, and *Madame de la Chanterie*.

In January, 1847, Madame Hanska came to Paris alone, — the young couple having gone to visit their estates in Poland. Certain allusions in Balzac's letters show that during this visit she identified herself with all his affairs, and approved of the home he was preparing for her. In fact, she was in part its purchaser, and joined with him in filling it with works of art. On her return to Poland in April, Balzac accompanied her as far as Francfort, and in the following September he made his first visit to Wierzschovnia, her home in the Ukraine.

These chronological facts thus baldly stated will serve to explain Balzac's letters which give the best pictures of his life and mind during these years.

"Berlin, Oct. 14, 1843.

"Dear Countess, — I arrived here this morning at six o'clock without stopping except for twelve hours at Tilsit. . . . As long as I was on Russian soil I seemed to be still with you, and though I was not exactly gay, you must have seen by my little note from Taurogen, that I could still make a jest of my sorrows. But once on foreign soil I can tell you nothing, except that this dreadful journey may be made to go to you, but not in leaving you. The aspect of Russian territory, without cultivation, without inhabitants, seemed natural, but the same sight in Prussia was horribly sad, — in keeping with the sadness within me. Those barren tracts, that sterile soil, that cold desolation, that utter poverty, pierced and chilled me. I felt more saddened than if there had been a contrast between the condition of my heart and that of Nature.

"I know how you feel by the way I do. There is a void within me which widens and deepens more and more, and from which I cannot turn my mind. I have given up going to Dresden; I have not the courage. Holbein's Madonna will not be stolen before *next year*, and then, in the month of May, I shall make the trip with other thoughts in my mind. Don't blame me for my faint-heartedness. My present journey gives me none of the pleasure I fancied it would when you said to me in Petersburg, 'Go here,' and 'Go there.' I listened, and went in spirit, for you bade me; but now, how can I help it? away from you, all is lifeless and soulless. Next year, perhaps! but now I have only the gulf of toil before me; and to that I must go by the shortest way.

"This dismal Berlin is not comparable with the sumptuous Petersburg. In the first place, one could cut out a score of mean little towns like the capital of Brandebourg from the great city of the great European empire, and the latter would still have enough left to crush twenty other little Berlins. At first sight Berlin seems more populous. I have seen more people in the streets than we did at Petersburg. Moreover, the houses, without being handsome, seem to me well built. The public buildings, ugly to look at, are of handsome cut stone, with space about them to show their proportions, — that is one trick, no doubt, by which Berlin seems more populous than Petersburg. . . . Berlin and its inhabitants will never be otherwise than a mean little city inhabited by vulgar, fat people; and yet I must admit that to any one returning from Russia, Germany presents an undefinable something

which can only be rendered by the magic word 'liberty,' — expressed in free manners, or rather, I should say, freedom in manner and ways."

"Oct. 16.

"I dined yesterday with Madame Bresson; it was a grand diplomatic dinner in honor of the king's fête-day. Except the ambassadress herself, the guests were all old and ugly, or young and frightful. The handsomest woman, though not the youngest, was the one I took into dinner. Guess who? — the Duchesse de Talleyrand (ex-Dino), who was there with her son, the Duc de Valençay, looking ten years older than his mother. The conversation was wholly made up of proper names and trifling incidents happening at court; it explained to me Hoffmann's ridicule of the German courts. . . .

"Monsieur de Humboldt came to see me this morning, charged, so he said, with the compliments of the King and the Princess of Prussia. He told me how to find Tieck at Potsdam. I want to see Tieck, and I shall take the opportunity to study that barrack of the great Frederick, who was, as de Maistre said, 'not a great man; at the most a great Prussian.' . . .

"Since writing the above I have seen Tieck in his family. He seemed pleased with my homage. There was an old countess present, a contemporary in spectacles, octogenarian perhaps, — a mummy with a green eye-shade, who seemed to me a domestic divinity. I got back to Berlin at six o'clock without having eaten a mouthful since morning. Berlin is the city of ennui. I should die here in a week. Poor Humboldt is dying of it; he pines for Paris."

"Dresden, Oct. 19, 1843.[1]

". . . Yesterday, having missed the hour for the Gallery, I wandered over Dresden in all directions. It is, I do assure you, a charming town: far preferable as a residence to that paltry and melancholy Berlin. There is more of the metropolis about it. It is half-Swiss, half-German; the environs are picturesque and charming. I can readily understand why persons should live in Dresden, where there is a mingling of gardens among the houses which refreshes the eye. . . .

"I saw so many Titians in Florence and Venice that those in the Gallery here seemed of less value to me. Correggio's 'Night' is over-rated, I should say; but his 'Magdalen' and two Virgins of his, the two Madonnas of Raffaelle, and the Flemish and Dutch pictures, are alone worth the journey. The famous 'Trésor' is nonsense. Its three or four million diamonds cannot dazzle eyes that have just seen the Winter Palace. Besides, a diamond says nothing to me; a dew-drop sparkling in the rising sunlight seems to me a thousand times more beautiful than the finest diamond, — just as a certain smile is more precious to me than the finest picture. It follows that I must come back to Dresden with you to let the pictures have full effect upon me. Rubens moved me; but the Rubens in the Louvre are more satisfying. The true masterpiece of the Dresden gallery is a picture by Holbein which eclipses all the rest. How I regretted that I could not hold your hand in mine while I admired it with that inward delight and plenitude of happiness which the contemplation of the

[1] Unimportant circumstances changed his plans and made him go to Dresden.

beautiful bestows. We are prepared for the Madonna of Raffaelle, but Holbein's Madonna seized me like an unexpected joy.

"It is eleven o'clock at night. I am in a hotel where every one has gone to bed. Dresden is quiet as a sick-room. I have no desire to sleep. Have I grown old, that the Gallery gave me so few emotions? Or is it that the source of my emotions has changed? Ah, truly, I perceive the infinitude of my attachment and its depth by the void there now is in my soul. For me, to love is to live; I feel this, I see it more than ever now; all things prove it to me; I recognize that never again can any taste, any absorption of mind, any passion exist for me but that you know of, — which fills not only my heart, but my whole brain.

"Adieu, dear star, forever blessed. There may come a time when I can tell you the thoughts that now oppress me. To-night I can only say that I love you too well for my peace of mind, and that absence from you is death to me. . . . There are moments when I see clearly the least little objects that surround you; I look at that cushion with a pattern of black lace worked upon it on which you leaned, — I count the stitches. Never was my memory so fresh. My inward sight, on which are mirrored the houses I build, the landscapes I create, is now all given to the service of the most completely happy memory of my life. You cannot imagine the treasures of revery which glorify certain hours — some there are which fill my eyes with tears."

"Passy, Feb. 6, 1844.

". . . I beg you not to be troubled about adverse reviews of me; it might be more injurious the other

way. In France a man is doomed if he gets a name, and is crowned while living. Insults, calumnies, rejection, will do me no harm. Some day it will be known that though I lived by my pen not a penny has ever entered my purse that was not laboriously and hardly earned; that praise or blame are alike indifferent to me; that I have done my work amid cries of hatred, literary fusillades, and have held my course with a firm hand, imperturbably. . . . Dear star of the first magnitude, I see, with regret, that you commit the mistake of defending me. When any one says harm of me in your presence there is but one thing for you to do, — laugh in your sleeve at those who calumniate me by outdoing what they say. Tell them, 'If he escapes public indignation it is only because he is so clever in evading the law.' That is what Dumas did when some one said to him that his father was black, and he replied, 'My grandfather was a monkey.' . . .

"You say in your last letter: What a volume that is which contains *La Maison Nucingen, Pierre Grassou*, and *Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan*. Perhaps you are right; I am proud of it (between ourselves). Next comes *Les Petits Bourgeois*, and after that *Les Frères de la Consolation*.[1] Nothing will then be wanting to my Parisian scenes but the artists, the theatre, and the *savants*. Those done, I shall have painted the great modern monster under all its aspects.

"Here then are the stakes I play for: during the present half-century four men will have had a vast in-

[1] Now named *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine*.

fluence on the world, — Napoleon, Cuvier, O'Connell; and I desire to be the fourth. The first lived on the blood of Europe, he was inoculated with war; the second espoused the whole globe; the third incarnated in himself a people; and I shall have carried a whole society in my brain. Better live thus than sit every night calling out, 'spades, trumps, hearts,' or troubling one's self as to why Madame Such-a-one does thus and so. But there will always be something in me that is greater than the writer, and far happier than he, — namely, your serf. My feeling, in itself, is to me nobler, grander, more complete than all the gratifications of vanity or fame."

"Feb. 6, 1844.

"Yesterday I consulted Dr. Roux (Dupuytren's successor), and he advises me to make a journey on foot as the only means of putting an end to the disposition my brain shows to become inflamed. When I don't suffer in the head I suffer in the intestines, and I have always a little fever. But just now as I write to you I feel well, or rather I feel better. . . .

"Ah, one more look at that dear room in Petersburg, and a deep sigh, alas, that I am not there! Why should n't you have a poet as others have a dog, a parrot, a monkey? — all the more because I have something of all three of them in me. I tell you again and again, *I am faithful* (here the countess throws up her head and casts a superb glance).

"Adieu, till to-morrow. The last two days I have recovered a little gayety. Can it be that something fortunate is happening to you?"

"Feb. 19, 1844.

" . . . Yes, you have every reason to be proud of your child. It is through seeing the young girls of her sphere and those who are the best brought-up here that I say to you, and repeat it, that you are right in being proud of your Anna. Tell her that I love her, for you whose happiness and pride she is, and for her own angelic soul which I appreciate. . . . Do you know what is the most lasting thing in sentiment? It is *la sorcellerie à froid*, — charm that can be deliberately judged. Well, the charm in you has undergone the coolest examination, and the most minute, as well as the most extended comparison, and all is in your favor. You, dear fraternal soul, you are the saintly and noble and devoted being to whom a man confides his whole life and happiness with ample security. You are the pharos, the light-giving star, the *sicura ricchezza, senza brama*. I have understood you, even to your sadness, which I love. Among all the reasons which I find to love you — and to love you with that flame of youth which brought me the only happy moment of my past life — there is not one against my loving, respecting, admiring you. In your presence no mental satiety is possible: in that I say to you a great thing — I say the thing that makes happiness. You will learn henceforth, from day to day, from year to year, the profound truth of what I am now writing to you. Whence comes it? I know not; perhaps from the similarity of characters, or that of minds, but above all from that admirable phenomenon called intimate comprehension, and also from the circumstances of our lives. We have both been deeply tried and

tortured in the course of our existence; each has a thirst for rest, — rest in our hearts and in our outward lives. We have the same worship of the ideal, the same faith, the same devotion. Well, if those elements cannot produce happiness, as their contraries produce unhappiness, we must deny that saltpetre, coal, and such things, produce ashes. But over and above these reasons it must be said, dear, that there is another, — a fact, a certainty; it is the inspiration of feeling, the inexplicable, intangible, invisible flame which God has given to certain of his creatures, and which enfolds them; for I love you as we love that which is beyond our reach; I love you as we love God, as we love happiness."

" Feb. 28, 1844.

"In spite of what you tell me of your plans for Dresden, I hardly believe in them. If you leave Petersburg the middle of May you cannot reach Wierzschovnia before the end of June; how then can you expect to be in Dresden in October? Will four months suffice to take possession of your rights, examine the accounts of the administration and the guardianship, and re-establish the *statum quo* of your personal government? No, I know you cannot leave in October; and I know, too, your anxious tenderness for your child will never suffer her to travel in winter. Do you comprehend what there is of despair to me in these convictions? Life was only supportable in the hope of Dresden; it will overwhelm me, annihilate me, if I have to wait longer. . . .

" I went this morning for the proofs of what I have written of *Les Petits Bourgeois*. The printing-office

is close to Saint-Germain-des-Près; the idea came to me to enter the church, and I prayed for you and your dear child before the altar of the Virgin. Tears came into my eyes as I asked God to keep you both in life and health. Perhaps, in returning from those heights I have brought back some gleams from the ideal throne before which we kneel. With what fervor, what ardor, what abandonment of myself, do I feel that I am bound to you forever, — for time and for eternity, as pious people say.

"I inclose the first flower that has bloomed in my garden; it smiled to me this morning, and I send it charged with all those thoughts and emotions which cannot be written. . . . No, never in my living life have I said one word of you, nor of my worship, nor of my faith; and probably the stone which will some day lie above my body will keep the secret that I have kept in life. Therefore, there was never in this world a fresher and more immaculate feeling in any soul than that you know of."

"Passy, Oct. 11, 1844.

"To clear off some twenty thousand francs of debt and to start for Dresden in December with *Les Paysans* finished, — that is my dream; and if not realized how can I live through 1845?

"The death of your cousin Thaddeus grieves me. You have told me so much of him that you made me love him whom you loved. You have doubtless guessed why I called Paz Thaddeus, and gave him the character and sentiments of your poor cousin. While you weep for his loss remind yourself that I will love you for all those whose love you lose. . . .

"Are you really satisfied with the young man?[1] Examine him without predilections; for such excellent prospects for your child will certainly tend to make the suitor himself seem perfect. Remember that her whole life is involved. I am glad the first points, those of taste and sympathy, so necessary for her happiness and yours, are satisfactory; but, nevertheless, study him; be as stern in judgment as if you did not like him. The things to be considered above all else are principles, character, firmness. But how stupid of me to be giving this advice to the best and most devoted of mothers. I am sure I don't know why I am recommending prudence to one who possesses all the wits of all the Rzewuski, and who has an eye at the tip of each dainty little finger.

"C—— came to see me yesterday. He is a terrible dullard. I am alarmed to think that the king takes him with him five times out of ten wherever he goes. Louis-Philippe commits the same fault that Napoleon committed. He wants to be *all* and *sole*. There comes a day when empires perish because the man they rest on perishes, having neglected to provide his substitute. One thing is certain, the peace and tranquillity of Europe hang on a thread, and that thread is the life of an old man of seventy-six."

"Passy, Oct. 21, 1844.

"I am perfectly well again, and have gone back to work. This is a piece of good news I ought to write to you at once. But oh! dearest, a year is a year, don't you see? The heart cannot deceive itself; it must

[1] Comte Georges Mniszeck, as suitor to her daughter.

suffer its own pains in spite of the false remedies of hope — Hope! is it anything more than pain disguised? . . .

"I went out yesterday for the first time; and I bought a clock of regal magnificence, and two vases of sea-green marble, which are not less magnificent. A rich amateur is covetous of my Florentine furniture, and is coming to see it. I shall ask forty thousand francs. Another bit of news: Girardon's 'Christ,' for which I paid two hundred francs, is valued at five thousand, and at twenty thousand with the Brustolone frame. I have also found a splendid pedestal for that bust by David, which they tell me is a great success. This beautiful thing only cost me three hundred francs, and the late Alibert, for whom it was made, must have paid fifteen or twenty thousand for it. And yet you laugh, dear countess, at my dealings in the kingdom of Bric-à-brac. Dr. Nacquart is very much opposed to my selling the furniture. He says: 'In a few months you will be out of your present difficulties, and these magnificent things will be your glory.' 'I like money better,' I replied. So you see, Harpagon was the poet, and the poet was Harpagon. Dear, believe me, I cannot suffer much longer as I am. Think of it! another delay! When *Les Paysans* is quite finished, I shall claim a word from you, permitting me to join you in your steppes."

"November, 1844.

"As for your suggested plan, I would rather renounce tranquillity than obtain it at that price. When a man has troubled his country and intrigued in court and city, like Cardinal de Retz, he may evade his debts at Com-

mercy if he chooses; but in our commonplace epoch a man cannot leave his own place without paying all he owes; otherwise he would seem to be escaping his creditors. In these days we are doubtless less grand, less dazzling, but we are certainly more orderly, perhaps more honorable, than the great lords of the great century. This comes, possibly, from our altered understanding of what honor and duty mean; we have placed their meaning elsewhere, and the reason is simple enough. Those great men were the actors on a great stage, whose business it was to be admired, and they were paid for being so. *We* are now the paying public, which acts only for itself and by itself. Therefore, don't talk to me of Switzerland or Italy, or anything of that kind. My best, my only country lies within the fortifications of Paris. If I leave it it will only be to see you, — as you well know. I should already have done so had you permitted it.

"I have received a letter from Lirette, asking me to be present at the ceremony of her taking the vows and veil." [1]

"December 3.

"I got up at half-past two this morning, worked till midday, ate a hasty breakfast, and reached the convent at one o'clock. These good nuns really think the world turns for them alone. I asked the portress how long the ceremony would last, and she replied, 'An hour.' So I thought to myself: I can see Lirette after it, and get back in time for my business at the printing-

[1] Mlle. Lirette Borel, a confidential friend or companion of Mme. Hanska, had come to Paris to enter, with Balzac's assistance, the Order of Saint-Thomas-de-Villeneuve.

office. Well, it lasted till four o'clock! then I had to see the poor girl afterwards; I did not get away till half-past five. However, it was right that my dear countess and Anna should be represented at the burial of their friend; so I went through with it bravely. I had a fine place beside the officiating priest. The sermon lasted nearly an hour; it was well written and well delivered, — not strong, but full of faith. The officiating priest went to sleep (he was an old man). Lirette never stirred. She was on her knees between two postulants. The little girls were ranged on one side of the choir; the chapter was on the other, behind the grating which was made transparent for the ceremony. Lirette, together with the postulants, heard the sermon on her knees, and did not raise her eyes. Her face was white, pure, and stamped with the enthusiasm of a saint. As I had never seen the ceremony of taking the veil, I watched, observed, and studied everything with a deep attention which made them take me, I have no doubt, for a very pious man. On arriving I prayed for you and for your children fervently; for each time that I see an altar I take my flight to God and humbly dare, and ardently, to ask his goodness for me and mine, — who are you and yours. The chapel, with its white and gold altar, was a very pretty one. The ceremony was imposing and very dramatic. I felt deeply moved when the three new sisters threw themselves on the ground and were buried under a pall, while prayers for the dead were recited over those three living creatures, and when, after that, they rose and appeared as brides crowned with white roses, to make their vows of espousal to Jesus Christ.

"Just then an incident occurred. The youngest of the sisters — pretty as a dream of love — was so agitated that when it came to pronouncing the vows she was obliged to stop short just at the vow of chastity. It lasted thirty seconds at most; but it was awful; there seemed to be uncertainty. For my part, I admit that I was shaken to the depths of my soul; the emotion I felt was too great for an unknown cause. The poor little thing soon came to herself, and the ceremony went on without further hindrance. . . .

"I saw Lirette after the ceremony; she was gay as a bird; she said she was so happy that she prayed continually that God would make us all monks and nuns. We ended by talking seriously of you and your dear child.

"To-morrow I am going to see a little house which is for sale near the church of Saint Vincent-de-Paul; the Byzantine church which we went to see, you remember, and where a funeral was going on. You said to me, looking at the vacant ground near the church, 'I should not be unwilling to live here; we should be near to God, and far from the world.'"

"Passy, Feb. 15, 1845.

"Poor dear countess, how many things I have to say to you. Without your inexorable order, I should have been in Dresden a month ago. . . . All these uncertainties have weighed heavily upon me; for how can I work when every hour I expect a letter to tell me to start at once? I have not yet written one line for the end of *Les Paysans*. This uncertainty has completely disorganized me. From the mere point of view of

material interests it is fatal. In spite of your fine intelligence you are unable to understand this, for you know nothing of Parisian economy or the painful straits of a man who tries to live on six thousand francs a year. But the worst of all is the impossibility of occupying my mind. How can I throw myself into absorbing labor with the idea before me of soon starting — and starting to see you? It is impossible. To do so I need to have no heart. I have been tortured and agitated as I never was in my life before. It is a triple martyrdom of the heart, of the head, of the interests, and (my imagination aiding) it has been so violent that I declare to you I am half dazed, so dazed that to escape madness I have taken to going out in the evening and playing lansquenet at Madame Merlin's and other places. I had to apply a remedy to such disease. I have been to the opera, and dined out twice, and tried to lead a gay life for the last fortnight. And now I *will* work night and day and finish *Les Paysans*. It will take a month of herculean labor, but I inscribe upon my brain (to be rejected by my heart) the words: 'Think no more of your star, nor of Dresden, nor of travel; stay in your chains and toil miserably.'"

"April 5, 1845.

"I do not know what to think of what you say of my letter. I, to give you pain or the faintest grief! I, whose constant thought it is to spare you pain! Good God! however right my intentions were, it seems that I have hurt you, and that is enough. . . . When I see you I will explain all. . . . Under such irritating circumstances I was impatient. I write my letters hastily and never read them over. I say what is in my mind

without reflection. If I had reread that letter perhaps I should have sacrificed it to Vulcan, as I often do others in which *my voice gets too loud.*"

"April 18.

"You write, 'I wish I could see you.' Well, when you hold this letter in your dainty fingers, may they tremble a little, for I shall be very near you, at Eisenach, at Erfurt, — I can't now tell where, for I shall follow my letter. To-day is Friday, and I start Sunday."

"Sept. 10, 1845.

"My faculties have come back to me more brilliant than ever. I am certain that the present two books will be worthy of the former ones. I tell you this to calm the anxiety of your fraternal soul as to the reaction of the physical upon the mental faculties, and to prove to you for the millionth time that I tell you the exact truth and hide nothing, either good or bad. Go to the baths of Teplitz, or elsewhere, if necessary, only be faithful to your promise at Sarmate. . . . I have no words but the mute language of the heart to thank you for that adorable letter, in which your gayety breaks forth with sparkling gush, — sweet treasure of your dear mind, which the charming weather has brought back to you. I remember your once saying to me: 'It is only wrong-doers who can stay sad when the joyous sun is shining.'

"I am working, working, — God knows how, and God knows why. When you hold this letter in your hand I shall probably have no debts, except to my family. We will talk these things over on the boat

from Chalons. There is much to tell, and I hope that this time you will not be dissatisfied with your servant. I have an enormous amount of work to do in thinking, writing, and correcting, so as to be free to accompany you. When this letter reaches you, think that we are each going towards the other. Take care of yourself; see to your health; your child's welfare depends on it. I dare not say mine, and yet, what else have I in this world?"

"Passy, January 1, 1846.

"Another year, dear, and I enter it with pleasure. Thirteen years in February since the happy day when I received your first letter. They seem to me links, indestructible, eternal, glittering with happiness and life. The fourteenth year will soon begin. . . . You are my happiness, as you are my fame and my future. Do you remember that early morning at Valence on the bank of the Rhone, when our gentle talk made you forget your neuralgia? when we walked for two hours in the dawn, both ill, yet without noticing the cold or our own sufferings? Believe me, such memories, which are wholly of the soul, are as powerful as the material recollections of others; for in you, soul is more beautiful than the corporeal beauties for which the sons of Adam destroy themselves."

"February 14, 1846.

"You do not yet know that I am silently collecting superb things in art furniture, — thanks to researches, tramps about Paris, economies and privations. I don't mean to speak of this, however; I shall not unmask my batteries until my dream gathers more and more the semblance of reality. . . . Yesterday I found two

Sèvres vases (of the Restoration) which were, no doubt, painted for some entomologist, for they are covered with the loveliest insects; evidently the work of an artist, and of great value, — a real discovery, a rare chance, such as I have never before met with. With time and patience one can find everything in Paris, even bargains. Just now I am in treaty for a chandelier which must have belonged to some emperor of Germany, for it is topped by a double-headed eagle. It is Flemish, and certainly came from Brussels before the Revolution; weighs two hundred pounds, and is all brass. I expect to get it for its intrinsic value, 450 francs. I want it for my dining-room, which will be in the same style. I see your alarm at this news; but don't be uneasy, I am not making debts; I obey your supreme commands. . . . I saw the other day in a bric-à-brac shop a miniature of Madame de Sévigné, done, I thought, in her lifetime. It can be had for very little; do you want it? It struck me as rather good, but I had no time to examine it properly."

"16th.

"I have seen that miniature again and it is hideous. But on the other hand I have bought a portrait of Maria Leczinska after Coypel, evidently painted in his atelier. I got it for the value of the frame. It is one of those portraits of queens such as they give to cities or great personages, and will do very well to decorate the salon. Gautier is to bring me a painter named Chenavard to pass judgment on it, for, like Louis XIV., 'I don't choose to deceive myself.'"

"Passy, June 14, 1846.

"My financial situation is better than I thought. My principal creditors are perfectly satisfied with the liberal manner in which I have settled their accounts. I can easily pay all. My health is excellent, and as for talent — oh! I have recovered it in all its early bloom. My arrangements with publishers will be concluded this week. Write me the exact time when you will permit me to go to you, so that I may be quite ready. Here is what I am going to work at now: *L'Histoire des Parents Pauvres*, *Le Bonhomme Pons*, and *La Cousine Bette;* also *Les Méfaits d'un Procureur du roi*, and the last of *Les Paysans*. This will bring me in more than my payments. . . . The publishing business is just now in a bad way. I am to see Furne, Véron, and Charpentier this morning.

"I am going valiantly to work with much ardor. Already I have spent two long nights on *Le Bonhomme Pons*. I think it will be a really fine work, remarkable even among those I am best satisfied with. You shall see! I have dedicated it to our dear Teano, and I want it to be worthy of him. The story belongs to the order of *César Birotteau* and the *Interdiction*. The point is to interest the reader in a poor and simple-minded man, an old man, crushed by humiliations and insults, full of feeling, forgiving all and revenging himself only by benefits. *La Cousine Bette* is also a poor relation, crushed by humiliations and insults, living in the midst of three or four families, and meditating vengeance for her bruised pride and wounded vanity. These two histories, with that of *Pierrette*, will make the series of *Les Parents Pauvres*."

"July 14, 1846.

"Two years of peace and tranquillity are absolutely necessary to soothe my soul after sixteen years of successive catastrophes. I feel, I do assure you, very weary of these incessant struggles. If it were not for the new motives for courage which have entered my heart I should, like that drowning man whose strength kept him up for hours in a furious sea, succumb at last to the gentler waves within sight of port. To be dragged incessantly away from all calmness and from the work of the mind by annoyances and anxieties which would drive ordinary people mad, is that living, I ask you?

"I have *not* lived in these latter years, except at Dresden, Baden, Rome, or when we journeyed together. Thanks be to you, oh, dear and tender consoling angel, who alone have poured into my desolate life some drops of pure happiness, that marvellous oil which does at times give courage and vigor to the fainting wrestler. That alone should open to you the gates of paradise, if indeed you have any faults to reproach yourself with, — you, perfect woman, devoted mother, kind and compassionate friend. It is a great and noble mission to console those who have found no consolation on this earth. I have in the treasure of your letters, in the still greater treasure of my recollections, in the grateful and constant thought of the good you have done to my soul by your advice and your example, a sovereign remedy against all misfortunes; and I bless you very often, my dear and beneficent star, in the silence of night and in the worst of my troubles. May that blessing, which looks to God as the author of all

good, reach you often. Try to hear it in the murmuring sounds which are heard in the soul though we know not whence they come. My God! without you, where should I be?" . . .

"July 20, 1846.

"You tell me of complications in your affairs. But, as you say, we must trust in Providence, for all things are in danger if we sound the earth about us. . . . I must tell you, however, that nothing surprises me more than to see you so troubled over things you cannot change, — you, whom I have seen so submissive to the Divine will; you, who have always walked straight before you, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and still less behind you, where the past is engulfed as one dead. Why not let yourself be led by the hand of God through the world and through life as you have been hitherto; and so advance into the future with that calmness, serenity, and confidence which a faith like yours ought to inspire? I must admit that in seeing my star, which shines with so pure a ray, thus disturbed about material interests, there is something, I know not what, which I do not like, and which makes me suffer. You have already given too much of your time and your beautiful youth to such cares, in spite of your instincts and your natural aversions; but you were then compelled to do so by necessity, by the interests of your beloved child, and by your sense of duty. Now that you have fulfilled with such scrupulous and meritorious thoroughness your obligations to your admirable daughter, who understands so well what she owes to you, and whom you have now established according to the choice of her heart and also in accordance with

your own ideas and sympathies, you surely have nothing more to do than to seek the rest and quietude you so fully deserve, and give up the burden of business affairs to your children, who will continue the work of your patient and laborious administration. What can you fear for them, so intelligent, so enlightened, so reasonable, so perfectly united, so fitted for one another? Why foresee events which might trouble such security? Why fear catastrophes which, I delight in thinking, can never happen? By spending your strength on imaginary dangers you will have none left for real ones — if they ever threaten you, which I doubt."

"July 29, 1846.

"I have just found a letter from your children in the post-office, to which Anna has added these few words, which make me uneasy. She says: 'Mamma is sad and suffering. You ought to come here and help us to distract her mind.' I went at once and took my place as far as Mayence. I shall go through as punctually as possible; you cannot doubt it. Adieu."

He joined them soon after at Wiesbaden and made the little trip to Strasburg which has already been mentioned. During this and the following year (1846, 1847) he did no other work than to finish certain books already in course of publication, and write the first third of *Le Député d'Arcis*, which was finished by M. Charles Rabou and published three years after Balzac's death.

In October, 1847, he made his first visit to Madame Hanska's home in the Ukraine, of which he gives the following description to his sister, Madame Surville.

"Wierzschovnia, Oct. 8, 1847.

"My dear Sister, — I arrived here without other accident than extreme fatigue; for I have come over a quarter of the earth's diameter and even more in eight days, without stopping or going to bed. If I had doubled the distance I should have found myself beyond the Himalayas. As I got here ten days before my letter, I greatly surprised my friends, who were much touched by my eagerness.

"This habitation is an actual Louvre, and the territory belonging to it greater than that of one of our departments. In France we have no conception of the extent and fertility of these great estates, where no manure is ever used, and where they sow wheat year after year. Though the young count and countess have something like twenty thousand male peasants (forty thousand souls) to their share alone, it would require four hundred thousand to keep all the land in cultivation. They only sow as much as they are able to reap and gather in. . . .

"The country is peculiar in the sense that side by side with the utmost magnificence the commonest comforts are lacking. This estate is the only one in the province which possesses a Carcel lamp and a hospital. There are mirrors ten feet high, and bare walls; yet Wierzschovnia is held to be the most sumptuous dwelling in the Ukraine, which is the size of France. Delightful tranquillity reigns. The authorities have been full of attentions, I might say chivalric attentions for me; otherwise without such miraculous help, I could never have got here; being ignorant of the languages of the regions through which I passed. From the European frontier to Odessa the country is a flat plain, like our

Beauce. My arrival has been sadly celebrated by two terrible conflagrations, which burned several houses. I saw the dreadful sight. . . .

"In spite of these fertile lands the commutation of crops into money is extremely difficult, for the bailiffs steal, and labor is scarce to thresh the wheat, which is done by machines. Nevertheless, few persons in France have any idea of the wealth and power of Russia. It must be seen to be believed. This power and wealth are all territorial, which will, sooner or later, make Russia the mistress of European markets for all natural products. . . .

"I have taken a heavy cold, which will probably last me two months; it is so bad I cannot leave the house. I ought to go to Kiev, the Rome of the North, a city with three hundred churches, to pay my respects to the Governor, who is viceroy of three great principalities of the size of an empire, and obtain my permit to remain here. It is physically impossible that I should return to Paris for six or eight months. The winter is beginning, and I could not risk a journey at that season. I shall probably be in Paris towards April; but even so, I shall return here immediately, as we wish to make a journey to the Crimea and the Caucasus and go as far as Tiflis. The idea of such a journey delights me. There is nothing finer than that region. They say it is like Switzerland *plus* the sea and the vegetation of the tropics."

"November, 1847.

"You cannot imagine the enormous wealth which accumulates in Russia and is wasted for want of means of transportation. Here (and Wierzschovnia is a palace)

they heat the stoves with straw, and burn more in one week than there is in the Saint-Laurent market in Paris. I went the other day to the *follwark* of Wierzschovnia, which is the place where they stack the wheat and thresh it; for this village alone there were twenty stacks, each thirty feet high by one hundred and twenty five feet long and thirty feet broad. But the thefts of the bailiffs and the heavy expenses diminish the revenues greatly. We have no idea in France of existence here. At Wierzschovnia, for instance, it is necessary to have all trades on the place. There is a tailor, a shoemaker, a confectioner, an upholsterer, etc., attached to the house. I understand now what the late Monsieur H. (who had a whole orchestra in his service) said to me at Geneva about his three hundred servants.

"My great hope and desire is not, as yet, near to its accomplishment. Madame Hanska is indispensable to her children. She guides and instructs them in the vast and difficult administration of the property. She has given all to her daughter. I knew of this intention when I was with her in Petersburg; and I am delighted that the happiness of my life is detached from all self-interests; it makes me the more solicitous to guard that which has been confided to me. . . . I have seen Kiev, the orthodox city of three hundred churches, and the riches of Lavza, the Saint Sophia of the steppes. It was well to see it once. I was showered with attentions. Would you believe it, a rich moujik has read all my books and burns a taper for me weekly before Saint Nicholas! He gave money to the servants of Madame Hanska's sister to let him know when I came to Kiev, so that he might see me.

"I have a delightful suite of rooms, — a salon, study, and bed-chamber. The study is in rose-colored stucco, with a fireplace, superb carpets, and commodious furniture. The windows are one sheet of glass, so that I can look round the landscape on all sides. You can imagine that Wierzschovnia is indeed a Louvre when I tell you it contains five or six other such suites of rooms for guests. As I am working hard just now, I breakfast in my own rooms and only go down to dinner; but the ladies and Comte Georges pay me little visits. It is a patriarchal life without the slightest ennui.

"Your letters gave me great pleasure. I am delighted to know from my mother that the little house in the rue Fortunée is carefully guarded. Madame Hanska has been very anxious about it on account of the valuables it contains. They are the product of six years' economy, and she is afraid of thieves or accident. It is indeed a nest, built straw by straw."

Balzac returned to Paris on the eve of the Revolution of February, 1848. It was at this time that he met the *gens-de-lettres* at the Institute, in response to Ledru-Rollin's invitation, of which Champfleury gives the amusing account already quoted. This young writer had lately dedicated a book ("Feu Miette") to Balzac, who in return invited him to the rue Fortunée. The account which Champfleury gives of the sumptuous little "nest," destined to see a month's fruition of the hope of years, is valuable as being one of the most personal pictures which we have of its master, and the only one which shows him to us in his last years: —

"On the 27th of February, 1848, three days after the departure of Louis Philippe, Monsieur de Balzac wrote to ask me to go and see him in the rue Fortunée. His household appeared to consist of a valet and a concierge. M. de Balzac came downstairs to meet me, wrapped in the well-known white dress of a monk. His face was round, his black eyes excessively brilliant; the general aspect of his skin olive, with strong red tones on the cheeks, and pure yellow ones about the temples, near the eyes; his thick hair was very black, but threaded with silver, — a powerful mane. In spite of the ample robe, I noticed that his stomach was enormous. Monsieur de Balzac was handsome. Unlike most persons who are unable to find the man of their thoughts when they first meet a genius, I was surprised by his *beauty*. . . . It was not, of course, that Greek beauty which has turned the bald heads of France and Germany; it was the beauty belonging to his intellect, which was not shut in within himself (as in many men), but expanded itself on his face. The face of the author of the *Comédie Humaine* showed strength, courage, patience, and genius. His eyes questioned and listened like those of a priest and a physician. I have never seen any like them for fulness of idea and depth. His joyous face inspired joy, just as an actor who yawns can make his audience yawn. All known portraits of Balzac are insufficient to represent him.

"After two hours' conversation I rose to go. M. de Balzac took me down a broad staircase different from the one by which we went up. I noticed, in passing, a marble statue of himself, three-quarter size, which

seemed to me second-rate. 'Ah! do you care for art?' he said to me. 'Then I must show you my collection.' We went up through other rooms until we entered a long gallery, in which the chief picture was a large Domenichino. There were many other pictures, but I have forgotten their subjects and the names of their painters.

"As we walked along, I wondered a little that I seemed to know the place. M. de Balzac explained the various objects. He told me, among other things, the genealogy of the frames. One of them had belonged to Marie de Médicis, and M. de Rothschild was anxious to possess it. I was turning over in my mind how it could be that I knew this gallery without ever having entered it, when, as we passed into another room, M. de Balzac stopped me before a little carved wooden frame, empty, yet hung intentionally in a strong light. 'When the famous —— [Dutch antiquary whose name I have forgotten] heard I had a frame by this master,' said M. de Balzac, 'he would have given the last drop of his blood to get half of it.' Then the truth flashed upon me. I was in the gallery of Cousin Pons. Here were Cousin Pons' pictures, Cousin Pons' curios. I knew them now.

"After the picture gallery we entered a room lighted by a single window. The door once closed, nothing could be seen but cases filled with books in good bindings. It would have been difficult to get out of the room without a guide. . . . M. de Balzac then showed me, with the enthusiasm of a proprietor, the arrangements of the house, the convenience of the rooms, the bathroom, the boudoir of the late banker Beaujon, the

frescos of which had just been restored; and, finally, a large salon, full of all sorts of curiosities, carved furniture, comfortable arm-chairs just repolished and carefully regilded. I spent three hours in this way, — three rapid hours, — during which M. de Balzac seemed to me the man I had pictured him, — the simple and sincere artist, full of a certain pride which charmed me, showing deep respect for the hand of man in art, and loving literature as the Arab loves the wild horse of the desert which he has mastered."

Balzac returned to Wierzschovnia in October, 1848, and did not leave it again till April, 1850. His letters to his sister during this period show the two-fold struggle that he went through; first, with the fatal malady that was already upon him (without his knowledge), and next in the unavailing effort to bring Madame Hanska to take the step of marriage. The letters are unutterably sad; not so much for what they say as for what the reader, with his clearer knowledge of all that was about to happen, sees in them. In the present day we know more of disease and its causes than the laity, or even many of the physicians, of the first half of this century. It is plain to all who read this history now that Balzac was in the grasp of a mortal malady as early as 1847, before he went to that cruel Russian climate, which gave him his *coup-de-grâce.* After he was taken ill at Wierzschovnia, he trusted, with his natural confidence, to a local doctor, who tortured him with remedies to no purpose, against the advice of his own son, a physician of broader intelligence. Dr. Nacquart, his lifelong friend and physician, being asked to give the causes of Balzac's death, wrote a long and

rather irrelevant statement, in which, however, the following significant facts appear: "A long-standing disease of the heart, aggravated by over-work at night, and the use, or abuse, of coffee had taken a new and fatal development. . . . His breathing was short and panting, and forbade all active motion; his voice, formerly so strong, was weak and broken; his eyes, once clear and far-sighted, were covered with a film or veil. The patient retained hopes of himself; but science had in the first instance diagnosed the complication of a marked albuminaria (*profonde albuminarie*), and could see no prospect of recovery." Balzac himself seems never to have lost heart; and this was fortunate indeed; for his ignorance as to his true state gave him his heart's desire in his marriage; which appears (we are thankful to feel) to have been as deep a happiness to his wife as it was to him.

The following letters and extracts of letters will tell briefly the story of the last two years: —

"Wierzschovnia, November, 1848.

"Young Ladies and very honored Nieces:[1]

"I am highly pleased with your letters, which gave me great satisfaction, and which any other uncle than one *known for his agreeable writings* would regard with blackest envy on account of their graceful liveliness, and the perfection of their style. Therefore have they won for each of you, as due recompense for such fine talents, a "caraco" made of magnificent termolama, trimmed with handsome fur; which your august uncle will endeavor to smuggle through the

[1] Mesdemoiselles Sophie and Valentine Surville.

custom-house, and which will make you objects of envy to all your companions in the drawing-class. You can never wear out your termolamas, because that thick, handsome silken stuff will last ten or fifteen years. The young countess has a fur-lined garment made of termolama, which her mother wore in 1830, and which still retains its colors. I don't know how the Orientals manage to put the sun into their stuffs. Those Eastern peoples are drunk with light.

"Do me the favor to send me the following receipts, clearly and carefully written out, so that they can be taught to moujik cooks: (1) the tomato sauce invented by your mother, exactly as it is served at your table; (2) the onion purée which Louise used to make at your grandmother's. For here, I must tell you, we live in the midst of a great desert, and in order to swallow a bit of beef or mutton (which is not Pré-Salé), one needs the resources and persuasions of Parisian cookery. Be proud of thus becoming the benefactresses of a land entirely deprived of veal, — I mean eatable veal; for the cows do have calves here as elsewhere, but those calves are republican in their leanness. Beef, such as you know it in Paris, is a myth; I remember it in my dreams. Excellent tea is a consolation, and the dairy products are delicious; but as for vegetables, they are dreadful. Carrots taste like radish, and turnips have no taste at all. On the other hand, they make porridge out of many things, millet, oats, buckwheat, barley, — I believe they make it out of the barks of trees. Therefore, my dear nieces, have pity on this region, so rich in corn, so poor in vegetables. How Valentine would laugh at the apples, pears, and plums. . . .

"Now, Sophie, you need not be uneasy about the music for the Comtesse Georges. She has the genius of music, as she has that of love. If she had not been born an heiress, she would certainly have become a great artist. Music, her mother, her husband, — there you have her character in three words. She is the fairy of the domestic hearth, the sparkle of our souls, our gayety, the life of the house. When she is not in it the very walls miss her, for she brightens them with her presence. . . . She is thoroughly educated, without pedantry; her naïveté is delicious; although she has been married two years, she is as merry as a child, and full of laughter as a young girl, — which does not prevent her from feeling a religious enthusiasm for noble things. Physically, she possesses grace, which is sometimes more beautiful than beauty, and this triumphs over a complexion which is rather dark; her nose is well-cut, but pretty only in profile; her figure is perfect, supple, elegant; her feet and hands delicate and wonderfully small. All these advantages are brought into relief by an air of distinction, of race, that indefinable air of easy grandeur which all queens do not possess, and which is now lost to us in France, where every one expects to be the equal of others. She speaks four languages as well as if she were born in the countries where they are spoken. She is keenly observing; nothing escapes her; I am often surprised by this myself; but with it all she is extremely discreet. After living in the house with her some weeks I could think of no word to describe her to my own mind but 'pearl.' Her husband adores her.

"I wish I could think that Valentine would study as

much as the Comtesse Georges, who, besides all her other studies, gives much time every day to the piano. The thing that has given her this splendid education is *work*. Now I must tell my dear little niece that to do nothing but what we like to do is the origin of all degradation, especially for a woman. Rules to obey, duties to be done, have been the law of this young girl's life, although she was an only daughter and a rich heiress. Even to this day, she is a little child in presence of her mother; she disputes with others the honor of waiting on her; she has an English, I may say, feudal reverence for her; she knows how to combine deep love and deep respect, tenderness with familiarity, without infringing on the enormous distance between her mother and herself. The young countess has never said 'thou' to her mother, and yet the problem of infinite tenderness and infinite respect is perfectly solved.

"Don't think this a lesson, my dear nieces. I know your affection for your parents, who have made your childhood and youth a poem, such as your mother and I never had in our day, and which your excellent mother vowed you should some day enjoy. In France we are not born, as these people are here, to see a whole population prostrate before social grandeur; we have no longer the right to think any one beneath us; we are each obliged now to acquire our own value personally. This will make a great people of us, — provided we do not let commonplace and vulgar vanities get the better of us. So I entreat Valentine to set tasks to herself, to find work to be done, if only to get the habit of duty, — of course without neglecting the ordinary

and daily employments of the household; and above all, to repress the desire to *do only what one likes*, for that is a descent into all misfortunes.

"But that's enough morality, — for you are both such little pests that you are capable of thinking I make your 'caracos' bitter to you. God forbid that I should be like those parents who spread their children's bread and butter with moral rhubarb."

"February 9, 1849.

"You tell me, my dear sister, that you think of leaving your present house and finding a cheaper one elsewhere. You are right; for in crises like your present one it is well to cut down expenses to absolute necessities. I can cite my own case for that. I never spent more on myself in Paris (counting carriages and trips to Saché) than two hundred francs. I advise you to look about the neighborhood of Passy, les Ternes, or Chaillot; there you will find as good an apartment as your present one for less money. If I were Surville I should take a single room in a central part of Paris and keep my office there. In this way you will pull through the present crisis. You know what means I employed to live cheaply. My cooking was done twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays. I ate cold meat and salad the other days. By contenting myself at Passy with strict necessaries, I managed to spend only a franc a head each day. I could do it again without blinking."

"March 3, 1849.

"The winter has not spared us; the cold has been like that of 1812. I took a fourth cold at Kiev, which

has made me suffer long and cruelly. The treatment I have been undergoing for my heart and lung trouble was interrupted, for I had no strength for it. I have reached the stage of absolute muscular weakness in those two organs, which causes suffocation for no cause at all, — a slight noise, a word spoken loudly. However, this last cold is getting better, and they are going to try and remedy the muscular exhaustion; otherwise, the journey home would be very difficult. I have had to get a valet, — being unable to lift a package, or make any movement at all violent. . . .

"The conclusion of the great affair of my life meets with difficulties foreseen and caused by mere formalities; so that though we are both most anxious to reach the rue Fortunée, there is still great uncertainty."

"March 22, 1849.

"At last I obtained permission to write to Petersburg for the consent of the sovereign ruler to our marriage. He refused it; and his minister writes that we know the laws and they must be obeyed. Weary of the struggle, Madame Hanska now talks of my returning to Paris, and selling everything in the rue Fortunée. Here, she is rich, beloved, respected; she spends nothing; and she hesitates to go where she sees only troubles, debts, expenses, and new faces. Her children tremble for her. You can see that in view of all these doubts expressed and felt about future happiness, an honorable man ought to depart, return the property in the rue Fortunée to whom it belongs, go back to his pen, and hide himself in some hole at Passy.

"I have, and I have always had in Madame Hanska the best and most devoted of friends, — a friend such as one finds but once in life. Her children love me as one of their own family, but they do not wish their adored mother to run the risks of an unfortunate future; and they are right. You cannot imagine the wisdom and good sense of Madame Hanska; they are equal to her educational knowledge, which is vast. She is still beautiful; but she has a dread of society and all its annoyances; she loves quiet, solitude, and study. . . .

"The only thing that I thirst for is tranquillity, domestic life, and moderate work in finishing the *Comédie Humaine*. If I fail in this completely, I shall take what belongs to me in the rue Fortunée and begin my life anew. But this time I will board in some establishment and live in one room, so as to be independent of everything, even furniture. Will you believe me when I tell you that the prospect does not alarm me — except for my mother. But even then, by spending only one hundred and fifty francs a month, I could still pay her income. If I lose all here I shall live no longer. I should be content with the garret in the rue Lesdiguières and one hundred francs a month. The heart, the mind, the ambition, can desire no other thing than that I have sought for sixteen years. If that immense happiness escapes me I have no need for anything — I could desire nothing. . . . You must not think that I care for luxury. I care for the luxury of the rue Fortunée with all its accompaniments, — a beautiful wife, well-born, a competence, and friends; but in itself it is nothing to me, — the rue Fortunée exists only *for* and *by* her."

" April 9, 1849.

"Would you believe that my troubles have made me lose two sound teeth, white and uninjured, and that without pain? No one knows what the years 1847 and 1848 have cost me; above all in the uncertainty that overhangs my fate. Here I have material tranquillity, and that is all. . . . I wish I could see something reassuring about the future; but all is doubtful and tending to the worst side."

" April 30, 1849.

" I am still here, detained by illness. Alas! I have paid tribute to 1848. I have come to such a pass that I can no longer brush my hair without suffocation and palpitation. Twice I nearly strangled from the impossibility of inhaling and exhaling my breath. I cannot go upstairs. . . . Happily there is a doctor here, a pupil of the famous Franck (the original of my Médecin de Campagne). He and his son say the trouble is a *simple hypertrophy* and answer for my complete cure. But here I am, in for a course of treatment for God knows how long. . . .

" This horrible illness, horrible for a man of my vivacity (for is it living to have to avoid everything, — the least expression of feeling, a word too eagerly said, a step too rapid?), is complicated by the effects of the climate. Till now, I have not felt the baneful effects of the Asiatic climate. It is fearful. I have headaches all the time. Heat and cold are both excessive. Asia sends us winds charged with elements quite other than those of European atmospheres. But, as I tell you, the doctors answer for my recovery, and I could not be as

well cared for in Paris as I am here, where every one shows me such tender, fraternal, filial feelings and genuine attachment, like that of a loving family. We live as though we had but one heart among the four. This is, I know, reiteration; but it is the only definition I can give of the life I live here. . . .

"Cost what it may, I shall return to Paris in August. One should die in one's form. How can I offer a life broken as mine is now? I shall do what my situation requires towards the incomparable friend who for sixteen years has shone upon my life like a blessed star."

"June 21, 1849.

"The trouble in my heart (not to speak of those in my stomach which are a consequence of it) has increased to such a degree that the treatment is renewed. I have been auscultated, and the disease named (so as not to alarm me) *simple hypertrophy*. It appears that the father undertook the cure against the advice of the son, who, imbued with our French ideas, thought it was all over with me. . . . [Here follow many details of his illness and treatment.] However, the doctor is confident he can complete the work and make me as good as new. He is a great physician, quite unknown. He does justice to the French faculty; says they are the first in the world for recognizing and diagnosing diseases; but declares them absolutely ignorant, with a few exceptions, of therapeutics, — that is, the knowledge of means of cure. Is it not dreadful to think that Frédéric Soulié died for want of this doctor of mine? — for two months ago I was as ill as Soulié was when he put himself under treatment."

"August 5, 1849.

"Affairs here, financially, are in a perilous state. Enormous crops, no money. I fear, for reasons not of a nature to put in a letter, that the purpose that brought me here is *indefinitely postponed.* Can you believe that it is impossible to send money out of this country? Not only does an imperial edict forbid it, but the Jews exact fifteen or twenty per cent commission. You can have no conception of the greed of the Jews here. Shylock was a joke to them, a born innocent. And remember this is only in the matter of exchange; when it comes to borrowing they sometimes require fifty per cent, even one Jew from another Jew."

"October 20, 1849.

"I have had what the doctor calls an intermittent cephalalgic fever. It was horrible. It lasted thirty-four days. I am as thin as I was in 1819; though there is still a little flesh on my stomach, the last refuge of the fat which illness has taken from me. . . . The fever is over and done with, but it has interrupted the treatment of the chronic affection. . . .

"Tell my mother that although I cannot return to Paris now, I have hopes of a happy termination of my journey here; you can safely say that. I had better stay here some months longer than go to Paris now and return. You may say that things are perhaps going better than I am willing to write. But manage so that she shall not suspect that I am ill.

"I have a dressing-gown for my illness which forever puts an end to the white robes of the Chartreux. It is made of termolama, a Persian or Circassian stuff, all

silk, with those miracles of hand-work you see in India shawls. It lasts for years. You are clothed with the sun. It is warm and light. My termolama has a black ground, with palm leaves wreathed with delicate little flowers with gold reflections, — all hand-work; something like Venetian brocade embroidered in silver and gold. My illness has made a baby of me. I am possessed by one of those delightful joys we only have at eighteen. I march about in the glory of my termolama like a sultan. I am writing to you now in my termolama.

"The Comtesse Anna and her husband have brought back from Wiezniovicz the alarm-clock of Marina Mniszeck, the czarina, whose wedding outfit, as appears from the archives of the family here, contained a bushel of pearls and *six chemises*. Their uncle was the last king of Poland, to whom Madame Geoffrin sold her pictures. The young count and countess have brought to Madame Hanska the loveliest Greuze I ever saw, "La Jeune Fille effrayée," done by Greuze for Mme. Geoffrin; and two Watteaus, also painted for Madame Geoffrin. These three pictures are worth 80,000 francs. There are also two admirable Leslies, "James II. and his first wife," a fine Van Dyck, a Cranach, a Mignard, a Rigaud, a Netscher, and a portrait of James II. by Lely, all superb; besides these, three Canaletti, bought by the king from the Rezzonicos, and three Rothari, finer than the Greuze. Rothari was a Venetian painter of the eighteenth century, almost unknown in France. The Empress Maria Teresa made him a count of the Russian empire. He is the Greuze of Italy. The Comtesse Georges wishes the three

Canaletti to be in my gallery, the two Watteaus, the Greuze, and the finest of the Rothari in the salon in marquetry, for which I now want only two flat vases in malachite, and two jars to make it complete. Oh, I forgot two Van Huysums, which if you covered them with diamonds would be scarcely paid for. What treasures these great Polish houses contain! and how the treasures rub shoulders with barbarism!

"Adieu; I chatter like a convalescent."

"Nov. 29, 1849.

"I have had to go back to the treatment for heart-disease. My doctor is a great physician, buried at Wierzschovnia, who, like many another genius, dislikes the art in which he excels. . . . He has invented *powders*. . . . He keeps the composition of his powders so great a secret that he will not even reveal it to his son. He has radically cured persons much worse than I.

"I don't wonder you are proud of your girls. They write me charming letters. . . . Those girls are the compensation for your life. We must not be unjust to Fate, we can accept troubles for such joys. It is just so with me and Madame Hanska. The gift of her affection explains to me my sorrows, my misfortunes, my labors. I have paid in advance the price of this treasure. Napoleon said that everything is paid for here below, nothing is stolen. I even feel as if I had paid very little. What are twenty-five years of struggle and toil to win at last so splendid, so radiant, so complete a love. It is now fourteen months that I have been living here in a desert, — for it *is* a desert, — and they have passed like a dream; without one hour of weari-

ness, without a word of discussion. Our sole disquietude has been caused by the state of our health and our affairs."

To his friend and intimate associate, Monsieur Laurent-Jan, Balzac wrote occasionally on the subject of his dramatic work. It is evident that his mind turned to that as the field of his future career. He speaks of it with all his old courage in his last letter to this friend: —

"Dec. 10, 1849.

"My dear Laurent, — A long and cruel disease of the heart, with many ups and downs, which attacked me in the winter of last year has prevented me from writing except on my inextricable affairs, and, as in duty bound, to my family. But to-day the doctors (there are two) allow me, not to work, but to amuse myself, and I profit by the permission to send you a little line.

"If I get back to Paris within two months I shall be lucky, for it will take nearly that time to complete my cure. I have grievously paid, alas, for the excesses of work in which I indulged, — for the last ten years specially. But don't let us talk of that.

"So, about the beginning of February I shall be in Paris, with the firm intention and desire to work as member of the Society of Dramatic Authors; for in my long days of illness I have thought of more than one theatrical California to work up. But what can I do here? It is impossible to send manuscript over a certain size. The frontiers are closed on account of the war, and no stranger is admitted to the country. I am sure there must be great difficulties in the way of litera-

ture and the arts in France at this time. All is at a standstill, is it not? Shall I find an hilarious public in 1850? It is doubtful. Still, I mean to work. Think, one scene written a day makes three hundred and sixty-five scenes a year, — that is, ten plays. Suppose five fail and three have only partial success; there remain two triumphs, which will be a pretty good result. Yes, courage! If health returns to me I will boldly embark on the dramatic galley laden with good subjects; but God save me from bringing up before a bank of oysters.

"I tell you, my friend, all happiness depends on courage and work. I have had many periods of wretchedness, but with energy, and above all, with illusions, I pulled through them all. That is why I still hope, and hope much.

"We have a learned man here, just from Kurdistan, where he found the Jews of Moses, pure blood.

"We shall meet soon."

"February 28, 1850.

"My dear Sister, — I was obliged to go to Kiev to renew my permit and have my passport viséd. Alas! it was fatal to my health. On the second day a terrible blast of wind, which they call here the *chasse-neige*, caught me, though I was so wrapped in furs no spot seemed left for it to reach me, and I took the most dreadful cold I have ever had in my life. . . . But my cherished hopes may be realized. If so, there will be further delays. I must go again to Kiev to take out proper papers. All is probable; for these four or five successive illnesses, and my sufferings from the climate (which I laughed at for her sake) have touched that

noble soul; she is more touched by them than she is, as a sensible woman, frightened by my few remaining debts. I see now that all will go well. . . . In that case my, or rather *our* arrival in the rue Fortunée will take place during the first two weeks in April."

"WIERZSCHOVNIA, March 15, 1850.

"MY DEAR GOOD, BELOVED MOTHER, — Yesterday, at seven in the morning, thanks be to God, my marriage was celebrated in the church of Sainte-Barbe at Berditchef, by a priest sent by the bishop of Jitomir. Monseigneur wished to marry us himself; but being prevented, he sent a very saintly man, the Abbé Count Czarouski, the oldest and most distinguished of the Polish Catholic clergy.

"Madame Ève de Balzac, your daughter-in-law, has taken (in order to remove all difficulties in the way of our marriage) the heroic resolution, prompted by her sublime maternal affection, of giving all her fortune to her daughter, reserving only an income for herself.

"My return is now certain; but it will depend on a journey to Kiev to alter my passport, and inscribe the name of my wife. . . . We are now two to thank you for all the care you have taken of our house, and to offer you our respectful tenderness.

"Accept the assurance of my respect, and my filial attachment. Your submissive son [*Ton fils soumis*]."

"WIERZSCHOVNIA, March 15, 1850.

"MY DEAR SISTER, — Yesterday, at Berditchef, in the parish church of Sainte-Barbe, a delegate from the bishop of Jitomir blessed and celebrated my marriage. So for

the last twenty-four hours there is a Madame Ève de Balzac, née Comtesse Rzewuska, or a Madame Honoré de Balzac. It is no longer a secret, and I write to you with the least possible delay. . . . The witnesses were Comte Georges Mniszeck, my wife's son-in-law, Comte Gustave Olizar, brother-in-law of the Abbé Comte Czarouski, and the priest of the parish of Berditchef. The Comtesse Anna accompanied her mother, both at the summit of happiness. It is, as you know, a marriage of the heart, for Madame Ève de Balzac has given her entire property to her children, — Comte Georges being, perhaps, better to her than any son would have been. . . .

"I hope we shall start for Paris in a fortnight; our journey will consume another fortnight. So, I can now say to you 'we shall soon meet.'

"Thy brother Honoré,

at the summit of happiness."

His old friend Madame Carraud had met with reverses. Her husband was dead; her means straightened; and she had been obliged to sell the greater part of her property. One of Balzac's first thoughts after his marriage was that it gave him the opportunity to do for her what she had done for him in his dark days.

"Wierzschovnia, March 17, 1850.

"My very dear and kind Madame Carraud, — I have put off answering your good and admirable letter until today, for we are such old friends that I cannot let you hear from any one but me of the happy conclusion of that long and beautiful drama of the heart, which has continued through sixteen years.

Three days ago I married the only woman I have loved, whom I now love more than I ever did, whom I shall love till death. I believe this union to be a compensation which God has held in reserve through all my adversities, my years of toil, the difficulties I have met with and finally surmounted. I had no happiness in youth, no blossoming spring-tide, but I shall have a brilliant summer, and the sweetest of all autumns. Perhaps from this point of view my most happy marriage may seem to you a personal consolation, by proving that after many sufferings there are blessings which Providence will, sooner or later, bestow. . . .

"I have so often described you to my wife, and your letter has so fully completed the portrait, that you seem to her a friend of long standing. Therefore with one and the same impulse, the same emotion of the soul, we both offer you a room in our house in Paris, where you can live absolutely as though you were in your own home. What can I say to you? That you are the only one to whom we would make such a proposal, and that you ought to accept it, — or you deserve trouble. For, reflect, did I not go to you in the sacred confidence of friendship, when you were happy and I was struggling through the storm, through the high waves of my equinox, drowned in debt? Now I can have the sweet and tender reprisals of gratitude. . . . Come to us, then, from time to time, to be near your son, to breathe-in art, Paris, elegance; come and see and talk with enlightened people, and refresh yourself in two hearts that love you, — one because you have been so good and tender a friend, the other because you have been all that to me.

"This is only what I did in the old days at Saint-Cyr, Angoulême, and Frapesle. There I gathered strength; there I had the sights about me that I needed; there my desires were quenched. You shall now know how sweet it was to live so; you shall learn by your own experience all that you were (without knowing it) to me, poor toiler,—misunderstood, weighed down through many years by physical and mental anguish. Ah! I can never forget your motherhood for me; your divine sympathy for suffering. Thinking of all this, and of the way you are bravely facing adversity, I — who have so often struggled with that rough adversary — I tell you I am ashamed of my happiness when I think that you are unhappy. But no, we are both above such pettiness of heart. Each can say to the other that happiness or unhappiness are only forms of being in which great souls can feel they live a stronger life. We know that we need as much philosophic vigor for the one position as for the other; and that the unhappiness which finds true friends is, perhaps, more endurable than the happiness which is envied.

"So, then, when you come to Paris you will come to us, and without sending word. Come to the rue Fortunée as to your own home, exactly as I used to go to Frapesle. It is my claim, my right. I remind you of what you said to me at Angoulême on the day when I (worn out with writing *Louis Lambert*, and ill, you know why) feared madness, and spoke to you of the way mad people were abandoned. You answered, 'If you go mad I will take care of you.' Never have I forgotten those words, your look, the expression of your face; they are all as plain before me as they

were on that June day of 1832. It is in virtue of that promise that I claim you now when I am mad with happiness."

"Wierzschovnia, April 15, 1850.

"My dear Mother, — We are delayed here. I can hardly see to write. I have some trouble in my eyes which prevents either reading or writing. It comes from a draught of air and the present medical treatment. The doctor is not alarmed. He wants me to continue the treatment six days longer. I have had a serious relapse in my heart-trouble and also in the lung. I have lost more ground than I had gained. Every motion that I make stops both speech and breathing.

"Oh, my poor eyes, — once so good!"

"Dresden, May 11, 1850.

"We have been three weeks in making a journey which should have taken six days. Sometimes it required fifteen or sixteen men to hoist the carriage out of the mud-holes into which it sank up to the doorways. At last we are here, living, but ill and tired out. Such a journey ages one ten years.

"Let the house be ready, flowers and all, by the 20th. . . . I want Madame Honoré to see it in its best array. There must be flowering-plants in all the jardinières. I mean this for a surprise, and shall say nothing about it. . . . Here is where the plants must be put: 1st, the jardinière in the front room; 2d, that in the Japanese salon; 3d, the two in the bedroom with the cupola; 4th, I want cape jessamine in the two tiny jardinières on the fireplace of the gray room with cupola; 5th, the two large jardinières on the staircase

landings; 6th, small ferns in the two bowls which Feuchères mounted. I don't know whether Grobé has finished the jardinière in marquetry for the green salon. If done (it must stand between the writing-table and the cabinet in marquetry), I want it filled with *beautiful*, *beautiful* flowers."

"There is a Turkish proverb," says Gautier, in the essay from which we have already quoted, "which declares that when the house is finished death enters. Nothing is so to be dreaded as a wish realized. His debts were paid, the longed-for marriage accomplished, the nest for his happiness lined with down, and (as if they foresaw the coming end) even his enemies were beginning to praise him. It was all too good; nothing remained for him but to die. His illness made rapid progress; but no one dreamed of a fatal end, we had such confidence in Balzac's athletic constitution; we thought he would bury us all.

"I was about to make a journey into Italy, and before leaving I went to say good-by to my illustrious friend in the rue Fortunée, where he had arrived with his wife a few weeks earlier. He had just driven out to the custom-house, the servant said, to recover some foreign curiosities. I left the house reassured; and the next day I received a note from Madame de Balzac, dated June 20, which kindly explained, with polite regrets, why I had not found her husband at home. At the bottom of the letter Balzac had scrawled these words: —

"'I can no longer read or write.

'"De Balzac.'"

"I have kept that sorrowful line, — the last, probably, that the author of the *Comédie Humaine* ever wrote. It was, though I did not comprehend it at the time, the supreme cry of the thinker and the worker: '*It is finished!*' The thought that Balzac could die never once came to me.

"A few weeks later I was at Florian's on the Piazza San Marco; the 'Journal des Débats,' one of the few French papers which reach Venice, lay beside me. I took it up and read the death of Balzac. I nearly fell upon the marble pavement; and my grief was suddenly mingled with a feeling of indignation and rebellion that was not Christian, for all souls are alike in the sight of God. I had that morning visited the insane hospital on the island of San Servolo, and had seen decrepit idiots, drivelling old men, human larvæ no longer directed by even animal instincts, and I asked myself why that luminous brain was put out like the snuff of a candle when the vital spark remained in those darkened heads with a fitful gleam."

Victor Hugo saw Balzac dying and dead, and the words in which he tells of that death-bed and the parting scene in Père-Lachaise may fitly end this memoir:

"On the 18th of August, 1850, my wife, who had been that morning to call on Madame de Balzac, told me that Balzac was dying.

"My uncle, General Louis Hugo, was dining with us, but as soon as we rose from table I left him and took a cab to the rue Fortunée, quartier Beaujon, where M. de Balzac lived. He had bought what re-

mained of the hôtel of M. de Beaujon, a few buildings which had escaped the general demolition, and out of them he had made a charming little house, elegantly furnished, with a porte cochère on the street, and in place of a garden a long, narrow, paved courtyard, with flower-beds about it here and there.

"I rang. The moon was veiled by clouds; the street deserted. No one came. I rang again. The gate opened; a woman came forward, weeping. I gave my name, and was told to enter the salon, which was on the ground-floor. On a pedestal opposite the fireplace was the colossal bust by David. A wax-candle was burning on a handsome oval table in the middle of the room.

"Another woman came in, also weeping, and said to me: 'He is dying; Madame has gone to her own room. The doctors gave him up yesterday. They all said, "We can do nothing for him." The night was dreadful. This morning at nine o'clock Monsieur became speechless. Madame sent for a priest, who came and administered extreme unction. Monsieur made a sign that he understood it. An hour later he pressed the hand of his sister, Madame Surville. But since midday the rattle is in his throat, and he sees nothing. He cannot live out the night. If you wish me to do so, I will call Monsieur Surville, who has not yet gone to bed.'

"Monsieur Surville confirmed all the servant had said. I asked to see Monsieur de Balzac. We passed along a corridor, and up a staircase carpeted in red, and crowded with works of art of all kinds, vases, pictures, statues, paintings, brackets bearing porcelains; then

through another corridor, where I saw an open door. I heard a loud and difficult breathing. I was in Monsieur de Balzac's bedroom.

"The bed was in the middle of the room. M. de Balzac lay in it, his head supported by a mound of pillows, to which had been added the red damask cushions of the sofa. His face was purple, almost black, inclining to the right. The hair was gray, and cut rather short. His eyes were open and fixed. I saw his side face only and, thus seen, he was like Napoleon.

"A light near the bed fell on the portrait of a young man, rosy and smiling, hanging over the mantel-piece. I raised the coverlet and took Balzac's hand. It was moist with perspiration. I pressed it; he made no answer to the pressure.

"The room was the same in which I had seen him a month earlier, gay, full of hope, certain of his recovery. We talked and argued long, politically. He reproached me for my 'demagogy.' He himself was legitimist. He said to me: 'How can you renounce with such serenity the rank of peer of France, the noblest of all titles except that of King of France?' He also said: 'I have bought this house of M. de Beaujon without the garden, but with the gallery leading into the little church at the corner of the street. I have a door on my staircase which leads into the church; a turn of the lock and I am there at mass. I care more for that little gallery than for the garden.'

"When I left him he followed me to the staircase, walking painfully, to show me this door. Then he called to his wife: 'Be sure you show Hugo all my pictures.'

"The nurse said, 'He will die at daybreak.'

"I turned away, bearing with me the remembrance of that dying face. As I crossed the salon I looked again at the bust, immovable, impassive, proud, and vaguely beaming, and I compared death with immortality. This was Sunday. They buried him on Wednesday. He was first taken to the Chapel Beaujon, through the door which, to him, had been more precious than the gardens of his predecessor.

"Edmond Giraud had made his portrait on the day of his death.

"The funeral services took place at Saint-Philippe-du-Roule. The minister of the Interior, Baroche, sat beside me in church, close to the coffin. He said to me: 'This was a very distinguished man.' I replied, 'He was a man of genius.' The procession crossed Paris and went to Père-Lachaise along the boulevards. Rain was falling as we left the church and until we reached the cemetery. It was one of those days when the heavens seem to weep. We walked the whole distance. I was on the right at the head of the coffin, holding one of the silver tassels of the pall. The other pall-bearers were Alexandre Dumas, Monsieur Baroche, and Sainte-Beuve.

"When we reached the grave, which was on the brow of the hill, the crowd was immense; the path was narrow and steep; the horses could hardly draw the hearse, and it threatened to slide backward. . . . The coffin was lowered into the grave, which is near to those of Charles Nodier and Casimir Delavigne. The priest said a last prayer, and I a few words. While I was speaking the sun went down. All Paris lay before me

afar off in the splendid mists of the sinking light, the glow of which appeared to fall into the grave at my feet as the dull noise of the earth upon the coffin interrupted my last words: —

"'No, it is not the Unknown to him. No, I have said it before, and I shall never weary of saying it, — no, it is not darkness to him, it is Light! It is not the end, but the beginning; not nothingness, but eternity! Is not this true, ye who listen to me? Such coffins proclaim immortality. In presence of certain illustrious dead we feel the divine destiny of that intellect which has traversed earth to suffer and be purified. Do we not say to ourselves here, to-day, that it is impossible that a great genius in this life can be other than a great spirit after death?'"

Let us leave him there where they laid him — the spot on which he stood in his inspired youth, and thought: "The noblest epitaphs are the single names, — La Fontaine, Molière, — names that tell all and make the passer dream."

A broken column and a single name now mark his grave.

APPENDIX.

I.

COMPLETE WORKS OF H. DE BALZAC.

La Comédie Humaine.

SCÈNES DE LA VIE PRIVÉE.

	Name.	Date.	Dedication.
1.	Gloire et Malheur . .	1829	Mlle. Marie de Montheau.
2.	Le Bal de Sceaux . .	1829	Henry de Balzac.
3.	Mémoires de deux jeunes Mariées	1841	George Sand.
4.	La Bourse	1832	à Sofka.
5.	Modeste Mignon . . .	1844	à une Polonaise [Mme. Hanska].
6.	Un Début dans la vie .	1842	à Laure [Mme. Surville].
7.	Albert Savarus . . .	1842	Mme. de Girardin.
8.	La Vendetta	1830	à Puttinati.
9.	Une double famille . .	1830	La Comtesse Louise de Turhein.
10.	La Paix du ménage . .	1829	Mlle. Valentine Surville.
11.	Madame Firmiani . .	1832	Alexandre de Berny.
12.	Étude de femme . . .	1830	Jean-Charles de Negro.
13.	La Fausse maitresse . .	1842	La Comtesse Clara Maffei.
14.	Une Fille d'Ève . . .	1838	La Ctsse. Bolognini, née Vimercati.
15.	Le Message	1832	Marquis Damaro Pareto.
16.	La Grenadière	1832	à Caroline.
17.	La Femme abandonnée .	1832	La Duchesse d'Abrantès.
18.	Honorine	1843	Achille Devéria.
19.	Béatrix	1838	à Sarah.

	Name.	Date.	Dedication.
20.	Gobseck	1830	Baron Barchou de Penhoën.
21.	La Femme de trente ans	1834	Louis Boulanger.
22.	Le Père Goriot . . .	1834	Geoffroy de Saint-Hilaire.
23.	Le Colonel Chabert . .	1832	La Comtesse Ida de Bocarmé.
24.	La Messe de l'Athée . .	1836	Auguste Borget.
25.	L'Interdiction	1836	Contre-Amiral Bazoche.
26.	Le Contrat de mariage .	1835	Giacomo Rossini.
27.	Autre étude de femme .	1839	Léon Gozlan.
28.	La Grande Bretèche . .	1832	

SCÈNES DE LA VIE DE PROVINCE.

29.	Ursule Mirouët . . .	1841	Mlle. Sophie Surville.
30.	Eugénie Grandet . . .	1833	à Maria
31.	Le Lys dans la vallée .	1835	Docteur J. B. Nacquart.
32.	Pierrette	1839	Mlle. Anna Hanska.
33.	Le Curé de Tours . . .	1832	David (d'Angers).
34.	Le Ménage d'un garçon	1842	Charles Nodier.
35.	L'Illustre Gaudissart .	1833	La Duchesse de Castries.
36.	La Muse du département	1843	Comte Ferdinand de Gramont.
37.	La Vieille fille	1836	E. Midy de la Greneraye-Surville.
38.	Le Cabinet des Antiques	1837	Baron Hammer-Purgstall.
39.	Les Illusions Perdues .	1836	Victor Hugo.

SCÈNES DE LA VIE PARISIENNE.

40.	Ferragus	1833	Hector Berlioz.
41.	La Duchesse de Langeais	1834	Franz Liszt.
42.	La Fille aux yeux d'or .	1834	Eugène Delacroix.
43.	César Birotteau . . .	1837	Alphonse de Lamartine.
44.	La Maison Nucingen .	1837	Mme. Zulma Carraud.
45.	Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes . . .	1838	Prince Alphonso Serafino di Porcia.
46.	Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan . .	1839	Théophile Gautier.
47.	Facino Cane	1836	à Louise.
48.	Sarrasine	1830	Charles de Bernard du Grail.
49.	Pierre Grassou	1839	Lieut.-Colonel Periollas.
50.	La Cousine Bette . . .	1846	Prince di Teano.
51.	Le Cousin Pons . . .	1847	Prince di Teano.

Name.	Date.	Dedication.
52. Un Prince de la Bohème	1839	Henri Heine.
53. Gaudissart II.	1844	La Princesse Belgiojoso.
54. Les Employés	1836	La Ctsse. Seraphina San-Severino.
55. Les Comédiens sans le savoir	1845	Comte Jules de Castellane.
56. Les Petits Bourgeois . .	1845	à Constance Victoire.

SCÈNES DE LA VIE MILITAIRE.

57. Les Chouans	1827	Théodore Dablin.
58. Une Passion dans le désert	1830	

SCÈNES DE LA VIE POLITIQUE.

59. Un Épisode sous la Terreur	1831	M. Guyonnet-Merville.
60. Une Ténébreuse Affaire	1841	M. de Margonne.
61. Z. Marcas	1840	Comte Guillaume de Wurtemburg.
62. L'Envers de l'Hist. contemporaine	1847	
63. Le Deputé d'Arcis.		

SCÈNES DE LA VIE DE CAMPAGNE.

64. Le Médecin de campagne	1832	à ma Mère.
65. Le Curé de village . .	1837	à Hélène.
66. Les Paysans	1845	P. S. B. Gavault.

ÉTUDES PHILOSOPHIQUES.

67. La Peau de Chagrin . .	1830	M. Savary.
68. Jésus-Christ en Flandres	1831	Mme. Desbordes-Valmore.
69. Melmoth réconcilié . .	1835	Général Baron de Pommereul.
70. Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu	1832	à un Lord.
71. Gambara	1837	Marquis de Belloy.
72. Massimilla Doni . . .	1839	Jacques Strunz.

Name.	Date.	Dedication.
73. La Recherche de l'Absolu	1834	Mme. Joséphine Delannoy.
74. L'Enfant Maudit . . .	1831	La Baronne James de Rothschild.
75. Les Maranas	1832	La Comtesse Merlin.
76. Adieu	1830	Prince Frédérick de Swartzemburg.
77. Le Réquisitionnaire . .	1831	M. de la Ribellerie.
78. El Verdugo	1829	Martinez de la Rosa.
79. Un Drame au bord de la mer	1834	La Princesse Caroline Galitzin de Genthod.
80. L'Auberge rouge . . .	1831	Marquis de Custine.
81. L'Élixir de longue vie .	1830	Au Lecteur.
82. Maître Cornélius . . .	1831	Comte Georges Mniszeck.
83. Cathérine de Médicis .	1836	Marquis de Pastoret.
84. Les Proscrits	1831	Almæ Sorori.
85. Louis Lambert	1832	Et nunc et semper dilectæ dicatum.
86. Séraphita	1833	Mme. Evéline Hanska, née Comtesse Rzewuska.

ÉTUDES ANALYTIQUES.

87. La Physiologie du mariage	1829	Au Lecteur.
88. Petites misères de la vie conjugale.		

(*End of La Comédie Humaine.*)

Théâtre.

Vautrin	Drame 5 Actes	Porte Saint Martin	1840.
Les Ressources de Quinola	Comédie 5 Actes	Odéon	1842.
Paméla Giraud	Drame 5 Actes	Gaieté	1843.
La Marâtre	Drame 5 Actes	Théâtre Historique	1848.
Le Faiseur (Mercadet) .	Comédie 5 Actes	Gymnace	1851.

Les Contes Drolatiques.

Œuvres Diverses.

Contes et Nouvelles et Essais Analytiques	in all	41
Physiognomies et esquisses Parisiennes	in all	27
Croquis et fantaisies	in all	39

Portraits et critiques littéraires. Polémique Judiciare . .	in all	25
Études Historiques et Politiques	in all	36
Correspondance de H. de Balzac	No. of letters	384

These works are contained, in the foregoing sequence, in the Édition définitive des Œuvres complètes de H. de Balzac, 24 vols. Calmann Lévy. Paris, 1879. The above list, and the two succeeding ones are made from those contained in the bibliographical work of M. le Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, — as already stated.

II.

COMPLETE WORKS OF H. DE BALZAC.

With Year of Composition.

1829.

Les Chouans.
Fragoletta, Latouche.
Physiologie du mariage.

1830.

Étude de mœurs par les gants.
El Verdugo.
Une vue de Touraine.
Complaintes satiriques sur les mœurs du temps.
Un Homme malheureux.
L'Usurier (fragment de Gobseck).
Étude de femme.
Visites.
Voyage pour l'Éternité.
L'Épicier.
Des Artistes.
La Paix du Ménage.
La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote.
Le Bal de Sceaux.
La Vendetta.
Gobseck.
Une double famille.
Le Bibliophile Jacob.
Le Charlatan.
Les Deux Rêves (Cathérine de Medicis).
L'Oisif et le Travailleur.
Madame Toutendieu.
Mœurs aquatiques.
Des Mots à la mode.
De la Mode en littérature.
Nouvelle Théorie du déjeuner.
Études pour Le Feuilleton des Journaux Politiques.
Adieu.

La Jeunesse française.
Étude de Philosophie morale sur les habitants du Jardin des Plantes.
De la vie de château.
Physiologie de la toilette.
Physiologie gastronomique.
Gavarni.
Le Ministre.
Un Entr'acte.
Une Vue du grande monde.
L'Élixir de longue vie.
Traité de la vie élégante.
L'Archevêque.
Ressouvenirs.
Les Voisins.
Une Consultation.
L'Opium.
La Reconnaissance du gamin.
La Colique.
La Comédie du Diable.
Fragment d'une Satire Ménippée.
Des Salons littéraires et des mots élogieux.
La Tour de la Birette.
Le Garçon de Bureau.
La Dernière Revue de Napoléon.
Sarrasine.
Des Caricatures.
Une Lutte.
Les Litanies romantiques.
La Danse des Pierres (fragment de Jésus-Christ en Flandres).
Le Petit Mercier (Hist. des Treize).
La Mort de ma Tante.
Le dernier napoléon (Peau de Chagrin).
De ce qui n'est pas à la mode.
Une Garde.
Si j'étais riche.
Vengeance d'artiste.
Entre Filets, I.
Une Passion dans le désert.
Une Inconséquence.
Entre-Filets, II., III.
Un Épisode sous la Terreur.
Souvenir d'un paria.
Lettres sur Paris.

1831.

Les Deux Dragons.
La Grisette.
L'Amour.
Le Marchand de bustes.
Une Passion au collège.
La Femme de trente ans, 1ere partie.
L'Enfant maudit, 1ere partie.
La Pièce nouvelle et la Début.
Un Lendemain.
Histoire de giberne.
La cour des Messagéries-royales.
Ci-git la muse de Béranger.
Une charge de dragons.
La Réquisitionnaire.
Une Famille politique.
Un commis-voyageur de la Liberté.
Mécanisme intellectuel, etc.
Saint-Simonien et Saint-Simoniste.
Paris en 1831.
Un Importun.
Un Député d'alors.
La Femme de Trente ans, 2e partie.
Le Cornac de Carlsruhe.
Le Dimanche.
Opinion de mon épicier.
Longchamps.
L'Embuscade.
Une semaine de la Chambre des Députés.
De l'Indifférence en matière politique.

Des signes particulières, etc.
Enquête sur la politique de, etc.
Tableau d'un intérieur de famille.
Le Provincial.
Inconvénients de la presse, etc.
La Patriotisme de Clarice.
D'un pantalon de foil de chèvre.
Le suicide d'un poête.
Une Débauche (Peau de Chagrin).
Les Proscrits.
Un déjeuner sous le pont Royal.
La Belle Impéria (Contes Drolatiques).
Ordre public.
Une séance à l'hôtel Bullion.
Conseil des ministres.
Croquis.
Don Pedro II.
Manière de faire une émeute.
Un conspirateur moderne.
Physiologie des positions.
Rondo brillant et facile.
Le Banquier.
Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu.
Physiologie de l'adjoint.
Deux rencontres en un an.
Les Grands Acrobates.
Un Fait personnel.
L'Auberge rouge.
La Peau de Chagrin.
Le Claqueur.
Vingt et un Septembre, 1822.
Jésus-Christ en Flandres.
La Comédie du Diable.
La Femme dé trente ans.
Le Sous-préfet.
Exaltation des ministres.
Moralité d'une bouteille de Champagne.
Critiques publiées dans La Caricature.
Physiologie du cigare.
La Fortune en 1831.
Grand Concert vocal et instrumental.
L'Embarras du choix.
Six degrés du crime Six degrés de la vertu.
Détails sur un préfet de police.
Maître Cornélius.
La Dôme des Invalides.

1832.

Un journée du nez de M. d'Argout.
Deux destinées d'homme.
Religion Saint-Simonienne.
Le Départ.
Histoire du Chevalier de Beauvoir.
Le Grand d'Espagne.
Échantillon de causeries françaises.
La Maîtresse de notre colonel.
Départ d'une diligence.
Voilà mon homme.
Madame Firmiani.
Le Message.
Le Colonel Chabert.
Procès de La Caricature.
Sur le monument du Duc de Berry.
Le Philipotin.
Terme d'Avril.
La vie d'une femme.
Facéties cholériques.
Contes Drolatiques (1er Dixain).
Le Refus.
Le Curé de Tours.
La Grande Bretèche.
Le Conseil.
Enseignement.
La Bourse.
Sur la situation du parti royaliste.
La Femme abandonnée.
Lettre à Charles Nodier.

Louis Lambert.
Voyage à Java.
La Grenadière.
Critiques publiées dans la Caricature.
Les Marana.

1833.

Critiques publiées dans la Caricature.
Préface de l'Histoire des Treize.
Histoire des Treize, 1er épisode.
Histoire des Treize, 2e épisode.
Le Prosne du joyeulx curé de Meudon.
Histoire de l'Empereur.
Contes Drolatiques, 2e Dizain.
Théorie de la démarche.
Persévérance d'amour.
La Muse du Département.
Le Médecin de campagne.
Eugénie Grandet.
L'Illustre Gaudissart.

1834.

Les Jeunes Gens de Paris.
Histoire des Treize, 3e épisode.
La Femme de Trente ans.
La Recherche de l'absolu.
Séraphita.
Lettre aux Écrivains français du xix. siècle.
Aventures d'une idée heureuse (fragment).
Le Père Goriot.

1835.

Un Drame au bord de la mer.
Melmoth réconcilié.
Lettre inédit de Louis Lambert.
Histoire des Treize (fin).
Le Contrat de Mariage.
Le Lys dans la vallée.
Séraphita (fin).
Brillat-Savarin.

1836.

La Messe de l'Athée.
L'Interdiction.
Études critiques, Chronique de Paris.
La France et l'Étranger.
Le Cabinet des Antiques.
Facino Cane.
Ecce Homo.
Le Lys dans la vallée (fin).
Histoire du procès du Lys.
L'Enfant maudit, 2e partie.
La Vieille Fille.
La confidence des Ruggieri.

1837.

Les Illusions perdues, 1ère partie.
Les Martyrs ignorés.
Les Employés, 1er partie.
Gambara.
Contes drolatiques, 3e Dizain.
César Birotteau.
Six rois de France.

1838.

Le Cabinet des antiques (fin).
Splendeurs et Misères des courtisanes.
Les Employés (fin).
La Maison Nucingen.
Traité des excitants modernes.
Une Fille d'Ève.

1839.

Le Curé du village.
Béatrix.
Illusions perdues, 2e partie.
Lettre à propos du Curé de village.
Massimilla Doni.
Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan.
Mémoire sur le procès Peytel.
Procès de la Société des Gens-de-lettres.
Petites Misères de la vie conjugale.
Le Notaire.
L'Epicier.

1840.

Pierrette.
Vautrin. (Drame.)
Z. Marcas.
Revue Parisienne.
Un Prince de la Bohème.
Peines de cœur d'une chatte Anglaise.
Guide-Âne, etc.
Monographie du rentier.
Pierre Grassou.
La Femme de Province.
La Femme comme il faut.

1841.

Une Ténébreuse Affaire.
Les Deux Frères.
Notes remises à MM. les députés.
Le Martyr Calviniste.
Ursule Mirouët.
La Fausse Maîtresse.
Voyage d'un lion d'Afrique.
Physiologie de l'employé.
Mém. de Deux Jeunes Mariées.
Cathérine de Médicis.

1842.

Les Ressources des Quinola. (Comédie.)
Albert Savarus.
Un Début dans la vie.
Les Méchancetés d'un saint.
La Chine et les Chinois.
Un Ménage de garçon.
Les Amours de deux bêtes.
Autre Étude de femme.
Avant-propos de la Comédie Humaine.

1843.

Tony Sans-soin.
Sur Cathérine de Médicis.
Honorine.
Monographie de la presse Parisienne.
La Muse du département (fin).
Spl. et Misères de courtisanes (fin).
Illusions Perdues, 3e partie.
Paméla Giraud. (Drame.)
Madame de la Chanterie.

1844.

Modeste Mignon.
Gaudissart II.
Les Paysans.
Les Comédiens sans le savoir.
Histoire et Physiologie des boulevards de Paris.
Ce qui disparait de Paris.
Béatrix (fin).

1845.

Une rue de Paris et son habitant.
Le Luther des chapeaux.
Un Homme d'affaires.
Petites Misères de la vie conjugale.

1846.

Une Prédiction.
Lettres à Hippolyte Castille.
Les Parents Pauvres, 1ere partie.
L'Envers de l'Hist. contemporaine.

1847.

Les Parents Pauvres, 2e partie.
Le Député d'Arcis (commencement).

1848.

Profession de foi politique.
La Marâtre. (Drame.)
L'Envers de l'Hist. Contem. (fin).

Posthume.

La Filandière.
Fragments, Revue Parisienne.
Le Faiseur (Mercadet).
Code Littéraire.
Les Petits Bourgeois.
Le monde comme il est, etc.

Inédit.

L'École des Ménages.
Étude sur la Russie (1849).

III.

TITLES OF BOOKS, TALES, AND PLAYS

Announced by Balzac, but never Published.

(Those relating to the Wars of the Empire were intended for Les Scènes Militaires.)

L'Absolution.
Une Actrice en voyage.
A marches forcées.
Les Amours d'une laide.
Anatomie des Corps Enseignants.
Les Anglais en Espagne.
Annunciata. (Play.)
Après Dresde.
L'Armée roulante.
L'Armée roulante. (Play.)
L'Attaché d'Ambassade.
L'Aubergiste.
La Bataille de Dresde.
Une Bataille vue de l'Empire.
La Campagne de France.
Causeries du Soir.
Le Chrétien.
Le Combat.
La Comédie d'amour. (Play.)
Comment on fait un ministère.

La Conspiration Prudhomme.
" " " (Play.)
Le Corsaire Algérien.
Les Courtisans. (Play.)
Une Croisière.
Débuts d'un homme politique.
Le Dernier champ-de-bataille.
Les Deux ambitieux.
Les Deux amours.
Deux bienfaiteurs de l'humanité.
Les Deux Extrêmes.
Les Deux Sculpteurs.
Dialogue Philosophique et Politique sur la perfection du XIX. siècle.
Le Diplomate.
Distraction.
Une Douleureuse histoire.
L'Émir.
Les Enfants.
L'Entrée en campagne.
Entre Savants.
Les Environs de Paris.
Étude sur la Russie.
La Fille et la Femme. (Play.)
Fragment d'Histoire générale.
Les Français en Egypte. 3 épisodes.
La Frélore.
La Garde Consulaire.
Gendres et Belles-Mères.
Les Gens ridés.
Gobseck. (Play.)
Les Grands l'Hôpital, le Peuple.
Le grand Pénitencier.
Les Héritiers Boirouge.
Histoire du succession du Marquis de Carabas dans le fief du Coquatrix.
L'Histoire et le Roman.
Intérieur de Collège.
Jacques de Metz.
Le Juge de Paix.
Le Juge d'Instruction.
Le Mariage de Prudhomme. (Play.)
Le Ministre. (Play.)
Le Ministre. (Novel.)
Les Mitouflet.
Monographie de la Vertu.
Moscou.
Le Nouvel Abeilard.
Orgon. (Play.)
L'Original.
Les Partisans.
Pathologie de la vie sociale.
La Pénissière.
Un Pensionnat de demoiselles.
Le Père prodigue. (Play.)
Les Petit Bourgeois. (Play.)
Le Philanthrope.
Pierre et Cathérine. (Play.)
Les Pontons.
Le Prêtre catholique.
Le Privilège, tableau du XV. siècle.
Le Prophète.
Richard Cœur d'éponge. (Play.)
Le Roi des Mendiants. (Play.)
Scènes de la vie du monde.
Sœur Marie des Anges.
Les Soldats de la République.
Sophie Prudhomme. (Play.)
Sous Vienne. 3 épisodes.
La Succession Pons. (Play.)
Le Théâtre comme il est.
Les Trainards.
Les Trois Cardinaux.
La Veille et le Lendemain. (Play.)
Les Vendéens, guerres civiles au XIX. siècle.
La vie et aventures d'une idee.
Une vue de Paris.

IV.

LIST OF THE AMERICAN TRANSLATIONS

MADE BY KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY, AND PUBLISHED BY ROBERTS BROS., BOSTON, U. S. A.

Those marked * are, or will be, in process of preparation.

THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE.

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE.

English Name.		French Name.
Fame and Sorrow.	(Tale.)	Gloire et Malheur.
The Purse.	"	La Bourse.
Modeste Mignon.	(Novel.)	Modeste Mignon.
Albert Savarus.	(Tale.)	Albert Savarus.
Madame Firmiani.	"	Madame Firmiani.
Paz.	"	La Fausse maîtresse.
La Grenadière.	"	La Grenadière.
Père Goriot.	(Novel.)	Le Père Goriot.
Colonel Chabert.	(Tale.)	Le Colonel Chabert.
The Atheist's Mass.	"	La Messe de l'Athée.
La Grande Bretèche.	"	La Grande Bretèche.
*A Start in Life.	(Novel.)	Un Début dans la vie.
*The Peace of a Household.	(Tale.)	La Paix du ménage.
*Gobseck.	"	Gobseck.
*The Injunction.	"	L'Interdiction.
*The Marriage Contract.	(Novel.)	Le Contrat de mariage.

SCENES FROM PROVINCIAL LIFE.

Ursula.	(Novel.)	Ursule Mirouët.
Eugénie Grandet.	"	Eugénie Grandet.
The Lily of the Valley.	"	Le Lys dans la vallée.

English Name.		French Name.
The Two Brothers.	"	Le Ménage d'un garçon.
The Illustrious Gaudissart.	(Tale.)	L'Illustre Gaudissart.
*Pierrette.	"	Pierrette.
*The Curate of Tours.	"	Le Curé de Tours.
*The Old Maid.	"	La Vieille fille.
*The Gallery of Antiquities.	"	Le Cabinet des antiques.

Scenes from Parisian Life.

The Duchesse de Langeais.	(Novel.)	La Duchesse de Langeais.
César Birotteau.	"	César Birotteau.
Cousin Bette.	"	La Cousine Bette.
Cousin Pons.	"	Le Cousin Pons.
Bureaucracy.	"	Les Employés.
Facino Cane.	(Tale.)	Facino Cane.
*Ferragus.	"	Ferragus.
*The House of Nucingen.	"	La Maison Nucingen.
*The Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan.	"	Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan.
*Pierre Grassou.	"	Pierre Grassou.
*Comedians unknown to themselves.	"	Les Comédiens sans le savoir.

Scenes from Military Life.

A Passion in the Desert.	(Tale.)	Une Passion dans le désert.
*The Chouans.	(Novel.)	Les Chouans.

Scenes from Political Life.

An Episode under the Terror.	(Tale.)	Un Épisode sous la Terreur.
An Historical Mystery.	(Novel.)	Une Ténébreuse Affaire.
*Z. Marcas.	(Tale.)	Z. Marcas.
*Madame de la Chanterie.	(Novel.)	L'Envers de l'Histoire contemporaine.

Scenes from Country Life.

The Country Doctor.	(Novel.)	Le Médecin de campagne.
Sons of the Soil.	"	Les Paysans.
*The Viliage Curate.	"	Le Curé de village.

Philosophical Studies.

English Name.		French Name.
The Magic Skin, with Introduction by G. F. Parsons.	(Novel.)	La Peau de Chagrin.
Louis Lambert (with same).	(Novel.)	Louis Lambert.
Seraphita (with same).	"	Séraphita.
Jesus Christ in Flanders.	(Tale.)	Jésus-Christ en Flandres.
The Hidden Masterpiece.	"	Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu.
Gambara.	"	Gambara.
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*Maître Cornélius.	"	Maître Cornélius.
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The story is powerful and original; but its readers will be most affected by its marvellous knowledge of human nature, and the deep-cutting dissection of character which makes the attempts of our own analytical novelists appear superficial and experimental. Life in all classes of the Paris of Louis Philippe's time is portrayed in the strongest lights and shadows, and with continual flashes of wit, satire, and sarcasm which spare neither politician, philosopher, priest, poet, journalist, artist, man of the world, nor woman of the world. Through a maze of heterogeneous personages Raphael, the hero, is carried, pursued by the relentless Magic Skin, which drives him mercilessly to his doom. The vices of high society are laid bare; but there is also a beautiful exposition of purity in the humble life of Pauline, who is the good angel of the story. In translating "La Peau de Chagrin" Miss Wormeley has done work that is at once skilful and discreet. It is a man's book, virile though not vulgar, and exposing prominences in French social views such as most writers veil in obscurities. Here all is frankly and honestly shown, but by a man of genius, who had no more need of prudish hypocrisy than Shakespeare.

Mr. Parsons's thoughtful preface is a fitting introduction to the most wonderful of all Balzac's romances. It is not a whit too strong for Mr. Parsons to write that, saving Shakespeare, "no man could have been better fitted to examine mental processes, to gauge their effects, to estimate their significance and to define their nature and scope" than Balzac. If Balzac had been a German, and not a Frenchman of the French, this book of his would be as much of an epoch-maker as Goethe's "Faust." It may take years before the fuller appreciation of "La Peau de Chagrin" comes, but it is a study of life which will be studied in centuries yet to come. — *New York Times.*

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